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秋ぎつね
Akigitsune

マギクラフトマイスター



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MAGI CRAFT MEISTER

- Volume 8 -

UNIFILERS' COVERT CONDUCT

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[Translated by: subpar translations]



マギクラフト マスター

人物紹介

殴られた敵ゴーレムはもんどりうつて吹っ飛んでいく。
衝撃で四肢は半ばもげてしまっていた。

「やつぱりこれはいいですね！」

敵万能ゴーレムの中には、振るわれる魔力砲を手で
押さえようとしたものもあつたが、結果は変わらなかつた。





崑崙島

蓬萊島

ローレン大陸

バズテクスト大地峡

クリューガー山脈

フランス王国

ショウロ皇国

首都ロイザート

ディバイド川

セルロア王国

首都サンジェルトン
アスール湖

首都エサイア

トーレス川

クライン王国

首都アルバン

レナード王国

首都カルナグ

エゲレア王国

首都アスト

ナウダリア川

首都ポルジア

エリ、アス王国



CHAPTER 1

BROTHER AND SISTER

On the 2nd of April when spring was in full swing, the Jin-Reinhardt group left Yada Village, and spent a night in the town of Coorz.

The next day they continued east without returning to the main road, finally arriving in the provincial city of Ikasanaato on the border of Celuroa Kingdom.

People who wanted to go from Egelia Kingdom to Celuroa Kingdom, or vice versa, went through here, and this immigration control was picky.

This was because the other party was Celuroa Kingdom; the border of Elias Kingdom wasn't controlled as strictly as this.

“It may take up to three days.”

“Well, it may be good to rest our bodies.”

Moving on a carriage in itself was tiring. Without having breaks every few days, one's body couldn't endure it.

And so, Jin decided to take this opportunity to repair the Automata Ann that was found in the ancient ruins of Keuwan.

On the night of the day they arrived in Ikasanaato, Jin had Ann deactivate temporarily, and with Reiko carrying her they warped to Hourai Island.

He was thinking he might tell the truth already if Reinhardt asked where he repaired her.

“Welcome home, My Lord. Oh my, who is this lady?”

In the research laboratory Laozi greeted him. Then, he saw the Automata Reiko had carried in and raised his voice in curiosity.

"Ah, this is an Automata I found in the ruins of something called Keuwan, her name is Ann. She was pretty hurt so I thought I'd repair her. Please make the preparations."

"As you wish."

And then because of Jin, Ann's repairs begun.

The first thing to do was to mend the Control Core. Jin transferred all the information Ann had to the prepared all-attribute Magi Crystals.

"[Transfer Info]."

By [Transfer Info] Jin made an exact copy. It was an especially close call, as after copying, the original Control Core broke into four pieces.

"Woah, just in time. If it's like this then I think there's the possibility that some of the information contains bugs."

That was Jin's analysis.

"If you've got a minute, Laozi, transfer the minimum information about Hourai Island to her, please. At the same time, also copy the information Ann has."

"Understood."

In this way, Laozi happened to gain information of things during the Great Magic War. They decided to simultaneously give Ann the minimum information for working under Jin from now on.

"My Lord, around 20 percent of the information is incomplete."

Laozi reported after copying Ann's information. It was as Jin had expected.

"Is that right, I thought so. Please restore as much of it as possible. It's fine even if it takes a while."

"I understand."

Leaving the matters of the information to Laozi, Jinn continued Ann's repairs.

"Next let's think the reproduction process and upgrading the materials through."

From a steel skeleton to a Light Silver one, from the tattered muscle tissue to the same

Magical Fibers Reiko used. The skin was prepared out of a Sham Dragon's wing membrane.

And, after going this far, Jin noticed a material he had never seen before on a shelf.

"Reiko, what's this?"

"Yes, it is something harvested from a Sea Dragon."

"Oh, the thing I heard from earlier. I see... I can use this."

To bring Ann's repairs to an end for now, Jin resumed the repairs.

Eyes from sapphire crystals. An Ether Converter, a Mana Driver, and shielding. He installed a Mana Tank, and made the hair out of Ground Spider's silk dyed blue.

After finishing installing the muscle tissue, next was to be the coating, however.

"Making her exactly the same as before is a little..."

Jin was troubled. To tell you the truth, there was something Ann had had installed that Reiko hadn't.

"I wonder if she was also used for 'that sort of thing'..."

During the war, within the troops that had had no female presence there had been female-type Automata. The reason can be easily guessed.

"I better not, after all."

Jin couldn't see any of his Automata that way. To the very end they were his daughters, and he loved them and that being the case he didn't think of them as sexual objects.

Finally, the clothes. He had her wear the same clothes as the five-colored golem maids. The color was black and there was no maid headdress.

"Alright, it's complete. [Activate]."

"Yes, master"

Ann got up.

"How is it, the state of your body?"

The activated Ann walked around and raised and lowered her hands to check her motions.

“It is very good. Thank you very much.”

“Alright, stay there on standby. Next, Reiko, come here.”

“Yes, Father.”

Jin called out to Reiko.

“Alright, Reiko, earlier you had a hard fight with Gigantes, right? I’ll check your whole body, but how about after that I strengthen you so that something like that won’t happen again?”

“Yes, I couldn’t ask for more. Please do.”

She shot back with a reply immediately. Jin nodded and,

“Alright, got it.”

First Jin had Reiko deactivate, and checked all the parts. And then.

“This is...”

Jin frowned. The reason was that a few places had been damaged.

The skeleton of the right foot looked a little deformed, and the Magical Muscles on both arms too looked to have snapped apart a bit.

There were no abnormalities in the chest cavity, but both the Ether Converter and Mana Driver had deteriorated a bit.

As expected running at 200 percent output appeared to have worked them too hard.

“This needs a complete reinforcement, huh. That and I need to give a warning to Reiko.”

Jin muttered and started working on Reiko’s improvements.

First was revising the whole body. He included things he had realized while inspecting Ann’s structure.

An Adamantite skeleton. Hollow, with the core having a spongelike structure. With this both lightness and strength could coexist.

For the muscles he used a composite of the fibers of a Sea Dragon's leather and the existing Magical Fibers.

By just rotating Magic Energy through Sea Dragon's leather it wouldn't deteriorate, and on top of that its high-power output was three times that of Magical Fibers. But controlling it was somewhat difficult, so he made it into a composite material.

For the skin he used a Sea Dragon's wing membrane. It seemed to be twice as robust as a Sham Dragon's membrane.

The result of using these materials was that somehow Reiko's weight lightened by 15 percent. Dragon-type materials should be feared.

"Hm, it's as I hoped. Like this the output can be increased."

Jin said, and added a second Ether Converter and a Mana Driver to Reiko. In other words, she could double her output.

"Even with this, against Gigantes I'd be little unsure."

Jin then started working on the final points of improvement he had thought about after that fight.

That was boosting the output.

It would be different if he had Elradrite, but to work without it Jin thought of something called a 'capacitor'.

Jin wasn't very well-versed in electronic circuitry, but he was aware that a capacitor was something that temporarily stored electric power.

In other words, normally unused output was temporarily stored and released as necessary, that was the theory.

For that purpose, he planned to install an ultra high performance version of a Mana Tank to Reiko. It would surely be useful when going south to where there was little Ether too.

Theoretically, it could be expected to have a momentary output of 1000 percent. He

couldn't think of a use for it though.

"This thing will take all the weight I reduced earlier, though."

After finishing up, Reiko's weight became precisely 30 kilograms. The reform took back the weight gained in the previous remodeling.

"Alright, Reiko, [Activate]."

Jin told the details of the improvements to Reiko who stood up.

"Understood. From now on, I'll limit myself to 3 percent output in normal use."

"Mh-hm. So, how're you feeling?"

"Very light. Thank you very much."

"Alright, in that case I've got something to say to you. Sit down over there."

"Yes?"

Jin had Reiko sit down. After thinking he then scolded her.

"Reiko, I'm happy that you fight for my sake. However, just taking the brute force approach is irresponsible so stop it. Okay?"

"Eh? The purpose behind Father repeatedly enhancing me, was it not so that I could use that force?"

"What the..."

Jin was greatly perplexed and silenced. It appeared that the enhancements he had given to Reiko in good faith had just made her more devoted to strength.

"That's wrong. I only enhanced you because I didn't want you to be broken even in the worst case scenario. Put more thought into fighting from now on."

"Yes, I understand."

Then Jin, Reiko, and Ann were about to return, when Laozi called out to Jin.

"My Lord, I have a proposal to make."

“Hm? That’s unusual. What is it?”

“Yes. Now that the amount of subordinates My Lord has has increased, there’s a possibility that by some accident or such they fall into someone else’s hands.”

What Laozi said was reasonable. When Jin heard that something popped into his mind, but he first motioned Laozi to continue.

“And so, I propose that just in case, we install a function for information erasure.”

“I see.”

What Jin had thought of in the spur of the moment was a self-destruct mechanism, but this was a much gentler idea than that. In the first place, even though it was Jin’s idea, he didn’t want to install something like a self-destruct mechanism to the golems that could be said to be his children.

Even the safety measure installed in Laozi was a destruction device only Jin could activate, so it wasn’t a self-destruct mechanism.

Those golems of Jin that did not use rare materials couldn’t possibly bring out the same performance as those that did. Currently just imitating Lotte was difficult.

On the other hand, concealing as much information about Hourai Island as possible was necessary.

“Alright, with Laozi as the guide enact that plan.”

“Understood.”

And like that, after this Laozi would add security measures to each one of the subordinate golems.

This time Jin returned to Ikasaato. He had stayed quite a while in Hourai Island, and when so he dozed off for a bit, or at least thought so, morning had come.

“Good morning.”

While rubbing his sleepy eyes Jin went to the dining room for breakfast.

“Good morning, Jin.”

Reinhardt gave morning greetings to Jin, then looked at his face and,

“Did you not sleep well? Your eyes are red.”

He said. Jin nodded, and replied that he missed sleep while thinking about various things.

“Good morning, Jin-kun.”

“Good morning.”

Elsa also greeted him.

The three went to eat.

“What are today’s plans?”

Jin asked Reinhardt.

“We’ll go handle the formalities. I can handle that alone, so Jin and Elsa, you two can do as you like.”

At that moment, the door of the dining room opened, and a military-ish man came in.

That man looked around restlessly, but finally walked towards Jin’s group. Then,

“Elsa, it’s been a while!”

No sooner had he said that than he hugged Elsa who had just finished her meal.

“Brother!?”

Elsa was surprised.

“Yeah, that’s right. Has it been two years? You’ve become prettier, Elsa. But best of all you look healthy.”

CHAPTER 2

RESTORATIVE MEDICINES

“Last time I saw you your height was only to my chest or so, you’ve grown bigger. And you’ve become prettier.”

The talker was a large man with hair the same platinum blonde color and light blue eyes as Elsa. Next he turned to Reinhardt.

“Reinhardt, sorry for having you babysit my sister.”

Reinhardt didn’t seem to mind his somewhat haughty tone and spoke to him amiably.

“It’s been a while, Fritz. So you’re a major now.”

“Uh-uh, I was promoted this year. It seems you’ve been somewhat busy lately too. The rumors about Schwarz Ritter have reached my ears.”

“I’m honored to hear that.”

As befitting for childhood friends, the two spoke without honorifics.

“Oh. Today I came all the way here to Egelia Kingdom’s edge as border security. And just across this hotel I recognized that a certain carriage had been parked. So I thought that just maybe, and right after found it was as I expected.”

Then the man called Fritz once more turned towards Elsa and,

“I wanted to have a good talk with you, but I’m still on duty. I’ll come again this evening.”

He said, saluted and briskly left the dining room. He didn’t seem to have paid attention to Jin from the beginning to the end.

When Fritz left Reinhardt scratched his head while he turned to Jin and,

“He surprised you, right? He was Elsa’s brother, the second son of Randol Family, Fritz Randol von Grosch. He works as the company commander for the troops garrisoned

outside the country.”

He introduced the man. Although he wasn’t here anymore.

“Fritz-niisama is a soldier. He’s a bit simple though.”

Elsa explained her brother’s temperament.

“I see, a muscle-brain, huh.”

Jin carelessly said what he thought.

“Muscle-brain?”

“What the, Jin, what’s a muscle-brain?”

Sure enough, it turned out that Elsa and Reinhardt needed clarification. Jin helplessly explained.

“Let’s see, muscle-brain is a figurative expression meaning having even the brain be made out of muscles, so it’s a word to describe someone whose strong point is in moving their body rather than thinking...I guess.”

He explained mixing in some a little indirect expressions. There was no way Jin could call Elsa’s real brother “foolhardy”, “a simpleton”, “empty-headed”, or something like that.

And yet, it seemed to go over well,

“Even the brains are muscle...Fritz-niisama...Pfft...”

Curiously Elsa seemed to be bursting into laughter. Seeing her holding in laughter was rather fresh.

“Ahahaha, what an interesting expression, Jin! Look, Elsa’s face. That’s something rare. ...Anyway, I’m off to handle the formalities. Elsa, what are you going to do?”

After Reinhardt’s question, Elsa who was still quivering finally managed to raise her face and,

“Mine said that she’ll show me around town today.”

She replied.

“Is that so, so Mine was from around here originally. Alright. Take care. And you, Jin?”

“Umm, I’ll casually look around town.”

“Is that so. Well then, see you in the evening. ...Claude, let’s go.”

“Yes.”

In the end Reinhardt put on his serious diplomat mode face and left the dining room along with the butler Claude.

“In that case, Jin-kun, see you later.”

Elsa left too. The left behind Jin faced Reiko who was hidden using [Stealth] and,

“Well then, Reiko, shall we go too?”

He said and left behind the dining room.



Jin returned to Hourai Island with Reiko.

The reason being that a lot of things he wanted to do had piled up. Incidentally, he left Ann in the hotel room. If anyone asked, she had the instructions to reply that Jin had gone to the town.

And now, speaking of the things he wanted to do, first on the list.

“Reiko, it’s a day late but happy birthday.”

“Eh? Father?”

Two days after the day Jin had arrived in this world. The third of April was the day he had restored Reiko. Today was the fourth. The reason for the delay was that he couldn’t make this in time without Reiko noticing.

“It’s new clothes. Wear these from now on.”

The clothes Reiko had worn until now were revealed to be a little worn out during the check-up after the fight with Gigantes, and so Jin had made her new ones.

The material was the same but this time the color was jet black. Together with Reiko’s

hair and eyes she was rather mysterious. As a matter of fact, this black dye had the highest anti-magic ability.

“Thank you very much, Father.”

Reiko immediately changed clothes on the spot. She carefully folded the old clothes, and put them in the equipment storage for Reiko.

“Mh-hm, it fits you well. You look a little more adult-like.”

Jin said and Reiko smiled happily.

Next was checking the information received from Ann.

Parts of it seemed to be damaged or missing, but according to Laozi by supplementing it a fair amount of information could be extracted.

“Laozi, how is it?”

Jin asked about the status of repairing the information from Ann.

“Yes. The restoration percentage of the information is 85 percent. The remaining 15 percent is greatly damaged, and regrettably it could not be restored.”

To the apologetic Laozi Jin said,

“Oh, there’s no way around that. So, inside the restored information, was there anything new? If there was, please tell me.”

And urged him to go from here. Laozi responded at once.

“Yes. The first matter is knowledge about medication. The second matter is information about golem suits. The third matter is about the beginning of the Great Magic War. The rest is still waiting complete restoration.”

“Somehow there seems to be only interesting information. But, the beginning of the war, so there wasn’t anything about the Ether Stampede?”

“No. It looks like Ann was abandoned before the Ether Stampede occurred.”

“I see. In that case it was inevitable. Well then, medicine, was it? Please tell me about

that."

About 98 percent of Jin's body was composed of Magi Atoms, that is, magical particles arranged into atoms. For that reason if there was an Ether Stampede Jin would probably vanish in the blink of an eye. That's why he wanted to know about the Ether Stampede.

But also, cells made out of Magi Atoms are more stable than regular cells. Consequently there's the side effect of no results of muscle training appearing, but on the other hand his health wouldn't be negatively impacted by illnesses or such. The sole exception was mental disorders.

Therefore even if he was wounded he wouldn't fall ill, was the state of Jin's current body. How things like growth or senility would turn out, he didn't yet know.

Be that as it may, Jin had an interest in medicine. In the knowledge he inherited from the preceding Magi Craft Meister, Adrianna Balbora Ceci, there was only a little relating to chemicals.

There was just barely enough information for Jin to make things like ointments protecting skin from irritating materials, or salves for burns.

"Yes. There is information about oral medicine that utilizes Magic Energy to improve the body's internal healing capability"

Jin was about to jump for joy after what Laozi said.

"Potions!"

It was the famous thing from games like a certain game about the last illusion or one about beating a dragon. The medicine's synthesis wasn't through Magi Craft but through what was categorized as alchemy and so Jin was extremely interested.

"Yes, it's the so-called Potion indeed. According to the information it can also be made to restore Magic Energy, making it the so-called 'Ether'."

The 'Ether' usually spoken of in this world was the source of the unevenly distributed Magic Energy, the 'Free Origin Energy'. Confusing, Jin thought.

"That's good. Do you know its manufacturing method?"

"Yes. The one made out of high-ranking devil beasts was the most popular one. After filtering the blood cells and such, it becomes something close to the so-called 'serum'."

After hearing that Jin wanted to try making it.

"Ahh, but where would you even get a high-ranking devil beast's blood."

Jin muttered but Laozi said,

"We have some."

"Eh?"

"The blood from the Sea Dragon beaten the other day was secured and cold-stored."

"Was it now, good work!"

This time Jin actually jumped up in joy. He immediately went to see the frozen blood in the freezer.

"Woah."

There was 20 drums of blood from the giant Sea Dragon. That's approximately four kiloliters, or four cubic meters. It was a preposterous quantity.

For experiments, Jin took an already-prepared subportion. Laozi had been sensible about this.

"Let's try purifying this first."

Jin searched his uncertain knowledge and decided to try a centrifuge. He could make the machine, but to begin with he decided on a simpler course of action.

"Reiko, I'll leave it to you."

He entrusted the task to Reiko.

"Yes, Father."

Reiko swung around the chemically inert Adamantite vessel where the blood had been poured in. Because the container had a high durability, he had her swing it at near the speed of sound, and it brought about unexpected results.

She was able to separate it into some three components.

Serum is essentially blood from which the blood cells, platelets, and such have been removed, but by further centrifuging it at a speed no one had thought to try, a liquid that ought to be called 'pure serum' appeared.

"Hmm, this clearest part must be the serum, right? Please put the remnants to the cold storage for later analysis."

Jin brought the crystal container in which the pure serum was before his eyes and looked into it. There was about 300 milliliters of it.

"Laozi, what do I do with this?"

"Yes. That is sure to contain an abundance of Mana. Please try examining it."

After being told that, Jin examined the Magic Energy's flow using [Inspection]. And then he found that it was certainly true. More precisely, no one could object to saying it was mostly Mana.

"Next is simply giving it directions. Directing it for 'Healing Improvement' makes it a Potion, and 'Absorption Improvement' makes for an Ether Potion."

Because Laozi had Jin's information, his explanation was easy to understand. However, these Potions made out of a Sea Dragon's blood had an over ten times better effect than those that Ann's era had had.

"I see, the idea is similar to inscribing spells into Magi Crystals."

After grasping that, Jin thought about inscribing the spell [Medicare] into it, but Jin couldn't use it. Right now Reiko was the same.

"Hmm, I need to have Reiko learn it from somewhere, don't I."

Jin muttered, and separated just 100 milliliters of it for an experiment, and tried charging it with the healing magic he himself knew, [Recover].

The liquid shined for a moment and then returned to normal.

"Hmm, I think there's a limit to the effectiveness, but there's no test subjects."

Jin wasn't wounded, and golems didn't need medicine. And because of that, Jin

helplessly decided to pour it into a bottle and carry it with him until there was a chance to test it.

Using the [Forming] magic he made a bottle out of crystal, and capped it with a block of wood resembling a cork. For now he put it in his pocket.

Now then, he also had an interest in the second thing, the golem suit.

“Powered Suits!”

Jin got unusually excited. However, there seemed to be only minor data.

“Hmm, I guess I have to teach myself how to make them.”

And thus, another unthinkable piece of equipment would be born.

CHAPTER 3

ENGAGEMENT

For the sake of reproducing the golem suit Jin began considering its specifications with great enthusiasm.

Shaping it like a knight's armor with a two-layered structure, and having muscles of Magical Fiber in between...Or maybe it would be fine to have the armor itself move using [Forming] magic, or something else.

Either way, fundamentally it was armor. And so its defence capability was essential.

"For now, let's try making a test piece."

First he'd build armor to fit himself, add the muscle configuration to its outside, and on top of that add the exterior armor, was Jin's plan for the course of action.

Because he had never built anything like armor it was considerably difficult. The material was the usual Light Silver. Because if it wasn't light it would be troubling.

For the first time in a while, Jin had Pelshka, Citran and Appleles for lunch after which he hummed and hawed building the armor until evening.

"Father, we have to return soon."

He worked with such zeal that if Reiko hadn't advised him he would've kept going until midnight.



"Nice, I made it in time."

He returned to the hotel, where the dining room's preparations seemed to be in good order.

"Ah, Jin-sama."

There a voice called out to him. Jin turned around and it was Claude, Reinhardt's butler.

"Oh, Claude."

"Your return was rather late. This evening the meal will be had outside, so please prepare for that."

"Outside?"

"Yes. At Elsa-sama's elder brother Fritz-sama's invitation."

I see, Jin thought. He did say it had been two years since last time, so surely as a brother he wanted to have a talk with her.

"Got it."

"In that case, they'll be waiting in the lobby after 30 minutes."

And with that Jin returned to his own room, and began preparing with great urgency.

Because he'd be with Elsa's elder brother, he decided to put on the Honorary Magi Craftsman's half coat.

He wanted to take a bath before it, but he didn't have the time and so he only wiped his body with hot water. He had Ann and Reiko help.

Finishing the preparations in 20 minutes, he went to the lobby where Reinhardt and Claude were waiting.

"Hey, Jin. Elsa went on ahead. It's a little early but shall we go too?"

Reinhardt said as soon as he saw Jin. Then he had Claude guide them, and they left the hotel.

"It is just nearby."

Just as he said, after five minutes they found the restaurant in question.

It was a three-storey building made out of stone that resembled marble. It had no extra ornaments and Jin couldn't decide whether to call it unrefined-looking or elegant in its simplicity.

Maybe because he had noticed Reinhardt, a cloak-wearing man who seemed like a non-commissioned officer came and,

“Reinhardt-dono, right? The major is waiting. Please come this way.”

He said and guided them. Because of the soldier’s brisk conduct, Jin who didn’t generally have a good impression of soldiers secretly had a good opinion of him.

The non-commissioned officer went to the second floor of the restaurant and knocked on a massive door and,

“Major, I have escorted the guests here.”

He said. Immediately he was commanded to open the door, and Jin’s group was invited in.

“Welcome, Reinhardt.”

Fritz who was inside said. Sitting next to him was Elsa in her favorite chartreuse dress.

“Come on, have a seat.”

Reinhardt and Jin were led to their seats by waiters and they sat down. Jin had the lowest seat. Claude stood next to the wall. Elsa’s nanny Mine was there too.

“Now, tonight is my treat so please eat to your heart’s content.”

Fritz said and raised his glass of wine.

“To my little sister, Elsa’s health. And to celebrate her betrothal, cheers!”

He led them in a toast, but no one joined him and instead had faces stiff with surprise.

“!?”

“Ni, nii-sama, what, I’ve, never, heard of this, before”

The most surprised one was probably Elsa herself. Agitatedly she pressed Fritz for an answer. But Fritz kept calm.

“What, you didn’t know? In the letter I got from father it was written that you knew.”

Elsa shook her head fervently,

"I didn't know. In the first place I'm not interested in something like that."

However, Fritz looked at Elsa with a serious expression and spoke as if admonishing her.

"Elsa, you turned 17 recently, right? A 17-year-old is a fine adult. Didn't you promise to marry after finishing this trip?"

"I didn't."

Mine was looking at the siblings' exchange with a terrible look on her face, but the only one who noticed was Jin. Because at any rate he was constantly treated like an enemy by Mine, so he thought that at a time like this she'd surely be angry, and sure enough she was.

And yet, Mine still didn't say anything to Fritz.

"But on the letter from Father it was certainly written that Elsa has promised to marry after she returns home from this trip."

Fritz said, and Reinhardt in turn said to him,

"She said that before marriage she'd tour the world at large, isn't that a very broad interpretation?"

But it was as if Fritz didn't hear him.

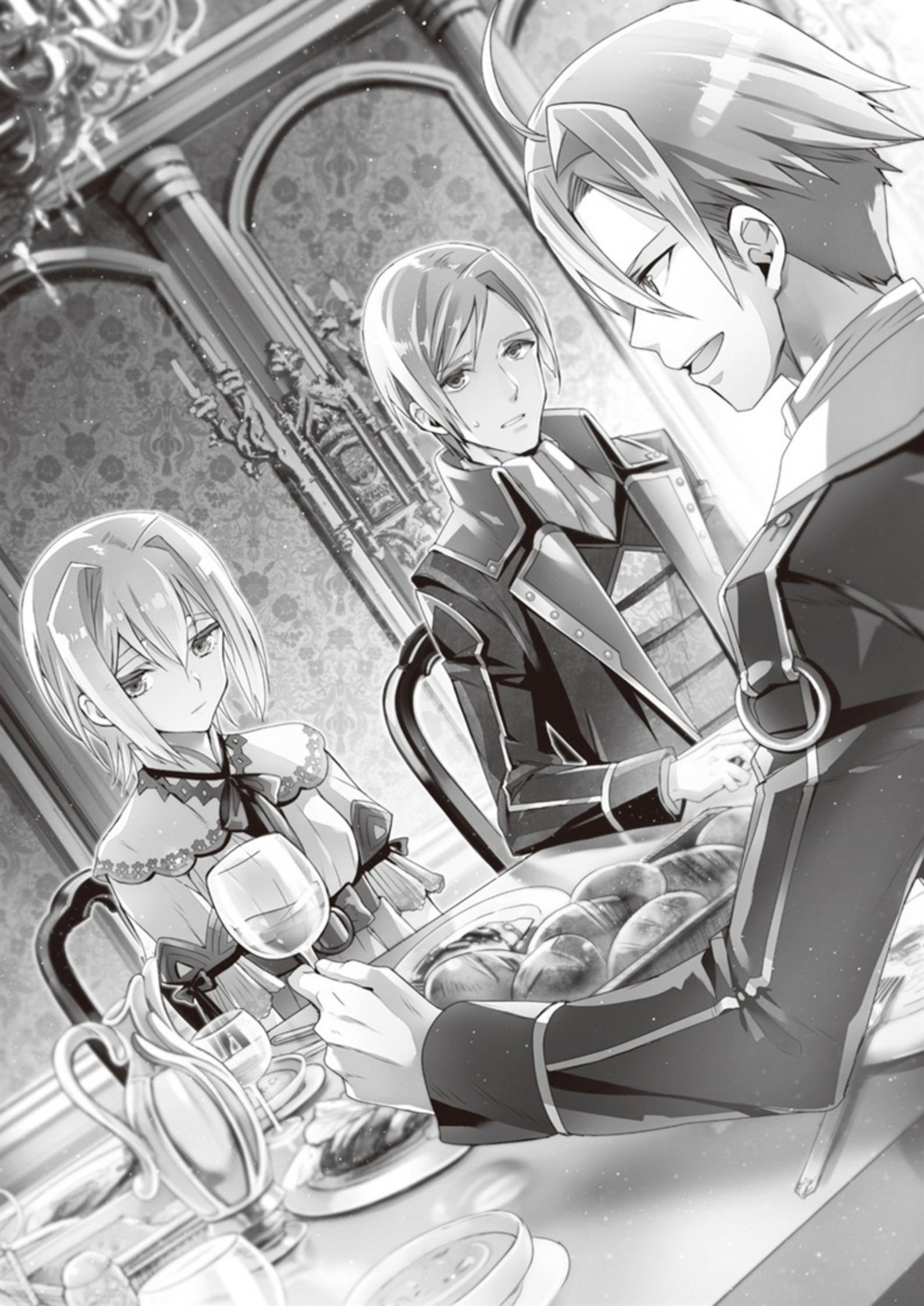
"Well, you're at a marriageable age already, and your partner is from a marquis's house!"

He had his own way.

"His grounds are next to ours so you must know him. He's Marquis Gehlen Theoderic von Aizen. Since his wife died a few years ago he's been looking for a second wife, so father certainly offered you."

Hearing that Elsa's face went pale. But without noticing her state Fritz continued his talk.

"Even though I said second wife, you'll legally be marrying as the first wife, and that's an amazing thing. Because it's marrying up. So, you must be glad, right?"



“...”

At this point Elsa had no words. Looking at the state of affairs, as you'd expect Jin couldn't stay quiet.

“Excuse me, Fritz-sama. How about Elsa's wishes?”

However, after throwing a fleeting glance at Jin, he sneered at him with a ‘umph’ and,

“Wishes? As if a noble's daughter who isn't even the successor could have something like wishes. It's a woman's duty to marry a partner that benefits the house.”

Hearing those words made Elsa's face go white as a sheet. Still, Reinhardt couldn't just let it pass and spoke trying to smooth things over.

“Fritz, isn't that a bit of an exaggeration? After all, informing Elsa of something like an betrothal all of a sudden would always come as a surprise.”

“Humph, Reinhardt, you're not planning to make Elsa your concubine or something, right? Because you've got a fiancée in our country.”

Fritz's face was somewhat red. Maybe despite his appearance he was weak with alcohol.

“Yeah, of course not. Elsa's my precious younger cousin. Nothing more, nothing less. But that's exactly why I want her to be happy.”

However, the heated-up Fritz had already turned a deaf ear to him.

“I'm saying, there's no greater happiness than marrying into a marquis's house.”

Elsa was hanging her head, tears of defeat gathering in her eyes. But it looked like Fritz interpreted that as just embarrassment and,

“Come now, everyone, for my sister Elsa's happiness, once more, cheers!”

He said and made a good showing by himself, but Elsa herself, Reinhardt, and Jin stayed silent like it was a funeral.

Of course they didn't have a good appetite, and as a result the brought-out cuisine was mostly left as-is.

For all that, the cause of the situation, Fritz, didn't seem to think of it as more than lack

of appetite caused by fatigue from traveling.



That night, after Jin had returned to the hotel, he visited Reinhardt in his room.

“Jin, huh. I was just thinking of going to see you too.”

Reinhardt said and offered a chair. Jin sat down and Reinhardt apologized.

“Jin, sorry. But Fritz used to not be like that.”

But Jin stopped Reinhardt and said,

“There’s no need for you to apologize, Reinhardt. More importantly, I’m worried about Elsa.”

“Yeah, me too. I couldn’t expect that she’d suddenly be told about a betrothal.”

“He seemed to be seriously thinking it was for Elsa’s sake but he was still in the wrong.”

Jin spoke his mind and even Reinhardt smiled bitterly.

“Certainly, becoming a marquise would be big. Since Elsa’s house would also gain in prestige. But the partner being who he is...”

“Is he that bad?”

Jin’s question was blunt.

“Hmm, if I remember right the Marquis is 53 years old this year. He’s rather fat. Well, he does look better than Earl Guarana.”

Being told that didn’t make Jin think the Marquis would be a good partner at all.

“Is marriage between nobles a this sort of thing?”

“Yeah. However, it’s just the nobles sticking to traditions. Especially family lineages of military personnel. My father wouldn’t do such a thing, but my uncle, how should say this, he’s obsessed with the desire of getting ahead in life...”

To Reinhardt who found it hard to talk about, Jin said,

“Reinhardt, you don’t have to badmouth your relatives. More importantly, let’s go see how Elsa is doing.”

“Yeah, you’re right.”

The two then went towards Elsa’s room together.

“The young lady is already resting.”

“Is that so, that’s fine then.”

As she had already fallen asleep, Jin and Reinhardt left it for tomorrow and decided to retire to their rooms for the night.

CHAPTER 4

ALL AT ONCE, NO ELSA

The next day, Jin was woken up by the hallway being noisy.

He put on his clothes in a hurry, went to the hallway to see what's going on, and there were several men in military uniforms going back and forth.

One of them noticed Jin and approached.

"Excuse me. But I'd like you to show me your room."

"Huh?"

Suddenly getting asked to show his room, Jin was surprised. But the man continued,

"Okay? If you're not going to say no then I'll go see it by myself."

He said and pushed Jin aside, then entered the room Jin was staying in.

"...What."

Jin didn't have anything to feel particularly guilty about in the slightest, but the man's attitude displeased him a little. The soldier soon came back out and,

"Hmm, nothing unusual. Sorry for the trouble."

He said and walked back into the hallway.

"Really, what."

Jin returned to his room. There Ann said,

"Master, I got the feeling that he was looking for someone."

Jin listened to Ann's report while thinking about pointless things like that Ann pronouncing the word 'master' with an extreme lisp could've been to the original creator's tastes.

"He ignored places like the built-in drawers of the desk, while searching under the bed

and in the wardrobe, and so he must've searched for something large, most likely a person I think."

Ann's report was rather outstanding in its insights.

"Someone, but who?"

"Well, to that extent I—"

At that moment there was a knock on the door. Jin told them to come in, and it was Reinhardt.

"Good morning, Jin."

"Good morning."

Reinhardt said and looked around the room. Jin noticed that and,

"Even you're involved, what's the matter?"

He asked. With a complicated look on his face, Reinhardt then said,

"Elsa is...gone."

"What's that you say?"

Jin was astonished. In that case, the earlier soldier must've been Fritz's subordinate or something, looking for Elsa.

"Elsa didn't seem to wake up and get out of her room even though it was morning. Mine who'd usually be awake by then couldn't be found either. I tried going to her room, but somehow the two seem to have disappeared."

"And so Fritz is going around looking for her."

"That's right. Did they also come here?"

"Yeah."

Jin looked out of the window. The soldiers who appeared to be Fritz's subordinates seemed to be splitting into groups to search. They must've been all together looking

for her through the whole town.

“What a mess.”

Jin muttered but he could somehow sympathize with the reason behind Elsa’s disappearance.

“If we assume she’s together with Mine, those guys probably won’t find them.”

Reinhardt said subduedly.

“In the first place, Mine is from a town near this Ikasanaato. She must be familiar with the terrain, and probably has acquaintances too. If Mine’s seriously running away with Elsa, then there’s no way they’d be found just like that.”

The tone of his voice carried the feeling that it would be better if they weren’t found.

“How do you feel about this, Reinhardt?”

Jin suddenly wanted to ask.

“About what? About Elsa’s marriage? Or about her disappearance?”

“About both.”

Jin said, and Reinhardt began to speak with a low voice.

“I don’t think that marriage is a particularly bad thing. Bear in mind when thinking about it that in the case of a marrying a noble who manages territory, he’s got butlers and stewards to assist him. For chores he has maids, so to put it bluntly being a decorative figure is enough. That’s a nobleman’s wife. And for children, it’s enough to hire a wet nurse.”

After all that, he grinned widely and,

“But that’s just in the case of old nobles.”

He said and carried on.

“It’s much different for Elsa, who wants to build a warm home. Her ideal is to marry a partner with mutual liking for each other, although there’s also people who say that love grows after marriage.”

After saying that, for a brief moment Reinhardt had a lonely look on his face. But the next second he returned to his normal expression and continued talking.

"Well, I can't say I don't understand their running away. Jin, have you noticed? Mine's and Elsa's relation."

"Mmh, a little. So that means you have too? Well, I guess that's obvious."

"Yeah. It's just a guess, but Mine is probably Elsa's real mother. It's a guess because that's something that even if I asked no one would tell."

That was probably the case. There's no way you could hear about it from Elsa's father. Much less the from person in question herself.

"Mine's way of talking to, her attitude towards Elsa, and the time she became her nanny, I thought about it a lot and I came to the conclusion she's likely her real mother."

Jin also shared his own opinion. Then,

"Well, I still can't say I agree with things like her method of teaching."

He added. Jin too had seen a lot of troubled children, and because of that he thought no matter how much time passed Elsa couldn't become independent.

"However, the question is what are we going to do now?"

Jin had a place in mind. Mine's parents' home should be around here, and if Elsa and Mine returned there they'd surely be found. Having said that, they could hardly wander around forever.

"Mine is in some respects broken, you know."

Reinhardt said. In this world, the expression 'broken' was used when a person had a mental illness, a trauma, or something like that. In addition it was used with personality flaws.

Hearing that, Jin thought that that was for sure. He had felt that Mine's attitude towards Elsa was strange in some parts.

"I wonder why Elsa's father hired Mine as her nanny."

Jin unintentionally spoke out his mind. Reinhardt replied to that,

“Elsa’s body wouldn’t last without Mine.”

“Eh?”

The shocking truth made Jin lost for words.

“Actually, to be accurate it wouldn’t precisely have to be Mine. However, I think it unlikely that a person similarly good with her circumstances could be found.”

Reinhardt was about to continue but Jin interrupted him in confusion. He seemed to have been told something unexpected.

“Ho-hold on, Reinhardt. This is the first time I’m hearing about this, what would happen if Elsa didn’t have Mine?”

Reinhardt tilted his head in confusion but,

“Ah, so I had not told you yet, Jin. I thought for sure I had talked about it, sorry.”

After a word of apology, he began explaining.

“I told you that Elsa’s been tomboyish since way back, right? One of the reasons was because of the ‘emissions’ she had. Elsa has a, it’s not a disease but, she has a flaw. It’s called the ‘excess Magic Energy disorder’.”

“excess Magic Energy disorder?”

Jin had never heard the expression before.

“Yeah. The Magic Energy that magi possess varies from person to person, but each one has their upper limit, right? Elsa’s limit isn’t very large. It’s just a bit higher than a regular magus’s.”

“Is that bad?”

But Reinhardt said,

“No no, here’s the point.”

He appeased Jin who seemed to want him to get to the point quickly.

“Magic Energy decreases when you use magic. That’s correct, right?”

“Mh-hm.”

“So, by resting the decreased Magic Energy naturally returns to normal.”

“Certainly.”

“In Elsa’s case, it returns to more than usual. So, the abundance of Magic Energy eats into her”

In this case rather than Magic Energy he must mean Mana.

In the case of eating too much and getting excessive nutrients, one grows fat, and then problems like diabetes appear. The case with Magic Energy is similar, there’s no general rule what happens but the fact is that one’s physical health becomes poor.

Jin tried imagining it. For example, if a golem’s Ether Converter created large amounts of excess Mana while operating, the Mana Driver would be unable to deal with it.

The excess Mana would be stimulated and transform because of small amounts of magic entering from the outside, and it would probably have a negative influence on the containing body.

Would the same thing happen within a human body? Jin could understand Elsa’s problem. And so, that was likely the reason why Mine tried to have Elsa not overexert herself much using magic.

“Her symptoms can be held back if she has a person nearby as an adequate safety valve.”

Jin understood. It was sure that blood relatives had a similar Magic Energy wavelength, and in the same way a person whose wavelength of life was similar could become a path for Mana and as such hold back the symptoms.

“Are there no other remedies? If Mine were not there, what would happen to Elsa?”

“If it’s not more than for seven or ten days, being apart from her isn’t a problem. Also, during that time by releasing Magic Energy using magic there wouldn’t be a problem. Unlike in her childhood, Elsa can understands that herself.”

Reinhardt saying so wiped out Jin’s worries.

“Hey Reinhardt, couldn’t she carry a Magi Tool to release Magic Energy?”

Jin asked in curiosity. But Reinhardt made a lonely smile and,

“Yeah, in theory it would be settled with that. But there’s one large problem.”

He said with a strained voice.

“That is?”

“In the form of magic it can be done, but there’s no such person who could build a Magi Tool that releases Magic Energy before invoking magic.”

“Eh?”

“Eh?”

Hearing that Jin knit his brows in wonder, and after seeing Jin like that Reinhardt’s expression turned to surprise. Their gazes met.

“There’s no one who can make one?”

“Don’t tell me, Jin, you can?”

Reinhardt timidly asked Jin who replied with a large nod.

“I think I probably could.”

CHAPTER 5

REGRET

The time for regrets would be later.

"Is that so, Jin, you could make one...My goodness. The person I've been searching for was this close."

Reinhardt was crestfallen and hung his head down. It was understandable.

A tool that only releases Magic Energy would be possible for Reinhardt too to make. However, with just that the problem would become Magic Energy exhaustion.

Well, maybe an easy-to-understand illustration would be something like diabetes caused by Magic Energy.

Having more than the required level of Magic Energy harms the body, while running out of it also results in a bad condition.

It was natural for him to come to the conclusion that there's no one who could build a Magi Tool that keeps Magic Energy at precisely the right level.

However, if you thought about it, it was probably only normal to not openly share secrets about Elsa's body, her being a viscount's daughter, with Jin whose origin and nature had been doubtful and unknown until only as of late. She was a relative but she also was another house's daughter. Just her having an illness would ordinarily be enough so that no one would marry her.

"If Elsa had just been my sister instead of my cousin, I would've long ago wanted to consult you about it, wouldn't I."

Reinhardt said, mocking himself. But now was too late.

At that time, once more there was a knock on the door. This time Ann opened it.

"So you were her after all, Reinhardt."

The knocker was Fritz.

“Of course I know you’ve already heard, but Elsa’s gone. Along with her nanny Mine. I will search for the two’s whereabouts. That’s why, Reinhardt, you can go now.”

“Eh?”

Reinhardt couldn’t really understand what Fritz meant. It was unusual for the quick-witted man.

“In other words, I’m saying it’s fine for you to no longer take care of Elsa. Sorry for your trouble.”

Saying just that Fritz turned and left without waiting for Reinhardt’s answer. From beginning to end he had ignored Jin.

“...”

“.....”

There was silence between the two. Then one of them sighed and,

“So, that’s the situation. Jin, as a result, we’ll be leaving here tomorrow. Do you still think you want to visit my country?”

With a lonely smile on his face, Reinhardt threw a question towards Jin. Jin immediately replied.

“Yeah. Of course. In that case it should be fine to leave tomorrow morning, right? Today’s plans are?”

Being asked that, this time Reinhardt smiled happily.

“Really! Thanks, Jin. I was worried that you’d come to dislike my country because of this series of complications. I’ll not be around for the morning because of the legal formalities. I expect to be back in the afternoon.”

“Got it. I’ll kill time as I see fit until evening.”

Jin replied to Reinhardt’s explanation. The two then parted ways.



After having a proper breakfast in the hotel, Jin once more warped to Hourai Island.

The reason being something had come to Jin's mind.

That was a Magi Tool to find Elsa's whereabouts. Assuming Elsa had the dagger and brooch Jin had made on her, Jin's Magic Energy pattern was surely recorded in them.

The Ring of Protection was an exception as it had probably adapted completely to its owner's Magic Energy.

In other words, what he thought about was trying to build a high-power Magic Energy detector.

"My Lord, you're not continuing the armor today?"

Laozi asked. Jin nodded,

"Yeah. There's a small idea that I had, so. Please prepare the materials."

"Understood."

What Jin thought to build was a superior version of the Magic Energy detector. A Magi Tool, no, a Magi Device that could sense the Magic Energy of an individual and pinpoint the location.

As a matter of fact, after the predecessor had died, to find a successor the Automata that was Reiko's previous body had spent 50 years developing such a device.

However, because of the thousand-year-long search, after finding Jin that device broke completely apart without leaving a trace, a part of the Automata's information was also lost, and at present there was no way of reproducing it. More than that, all traces of such a device ever existing had vanished. Including memories.

And that's why once more Jin had to build one from scratch.

The foundation was the built-in sensor in Reiko. It could tune for a particular Magic

Energy and discern the direction and strength. Its precision wasn't very good.

He planned to install three large-scale versions of it on Hourai Island.

If you knew the direction, then by drawing two straight lines from two different points the location would be shown at their intersection. Because the two points can't be moved, to prepare against the worst case that the lines to the target overlap, Jin thought that a rather good precision could be expected by adding one more for a total of three sensors.

Like with radio waves, conforming Magic Energies would resonate, and he utilized that principle of resonance. Instead of a coil he inscribed a Magi Formula into a Magi Crystal. Jin wrote the Magi Formula carefully.

On the side, Reiko was building the sensor's chassis and support beams according to Jin's instructions.

Looking at the situation was Hourai Island's brain, Laozi, thinking that if only he had arms and legs he could be more helpful for Jin.

Next, Jin was stumped by how to quantify the direction of the detected Magic Energy. If this was his original world he would have the compass or even the location of the North Star.

"Ah, a compass is required for navigating with ships and planes too, huh."

And so he temporarily stopped the construction of the sensors, and tried making a compass.

First he decided to try experimentally magnetizing a steel needle, pricking it through paper and having that float in a wash bowl filled with water. He had a needle, paper, and a wash bowl, but magnetizing would be difficult.

In the end, he made wire out of copper with [Forming], and painted the surface with the sap of a tree that resembled a lacquer tree to insulate it.

In this way he made an imitation of a magnet wire, then he piled up thin sheets of copper and zinc and inserted paper soaked with Citran juice between them, making a battery that he could connect to the electromagnet.

He magnetized the steel needle's iron core, and finally the magnetic needle was completed.

Jin pricked a piece of paper with it and floated it in water, and the simple compass quickly pointed north and south. With this he discovered that this world also had geomagnetism.

Jin went on to building a regular compass. A steel needle, a small crystal for a bearing, and an aluminum case. He segmented the compass rose to 360 degrees, added east, west, south, and north to it, then northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest, and in between those he marked the eight directions of north-northeast and so on, for a total of 16 directions.

If he wanted to have more precision, he thought he ought to use landmarks like the North Star, but this would do for now.

After adding the compass rose to the three sensors, in approximately three hours they were completed. He equipped each one with independent golem brains, and made them able to exchange information with ManaComs.

One was mounted on top of Hourai Island's research laboratory in the south, another in the southeast bay, and the last one on top of a hill in the southwest orchard.

"Alright, now tune it to my Magic Energy. Let me know about the directions each one senses."

Managing this was Laozi. Immediately the information was sent to Laozi, who conveyed the information to Jin after processing.

"My Lord, the largest response is from A:179, B:347, C:61."

A was the sensor on the research laboratory, B the one in the bay, and C the one in the orchard. Magnetic north was 0 degrees, and a clockwise rotation was quantified as 360 degrees.

"Mh-hm, they are a right match for me as I'm in front of the research facility. This seems usable. Can you find other golems for example?"

All the golems Jin had made had the same Magic Energy pattern as Jin. The difference was intensity. Therefore they could be searched for with the same sensor, however.

“The number of golems on the island is too large, making finding a specific one difficult.”

It was like this. Right in front of them there were many ways to discern them, but it seemed to be unreasonable with just the Magic Energy pattern.

“Oh, is that so. Then, how about the air force?”

In the case of the golems flying to make maps the number was small.

“Yes, it is possible to pinpoint them. Their locations are...”

But Jin interrupted that,

“Yeah, you can spare me the details. More importantly, instead of numerical values can you try to represent the information as spots on the completed maps, please?”

He instructed Laozi. This was because it was hard to understand a report with individual numerical values for directions.

“Understood.”

And so because of this, it became possible for Hourai Island to investigate Jin’s lineup.

If there was someone he wanted to find, that was surely Elsa. Although to be precise it was the Magi Tool Elsa was holding.

“My Lord, I have a request.”

After that conclusion, during the break Laozi told Jin of the request he had thought of not long ago.

“Could you build a external human-type terminal for me?”

In other words, a golem or an Automata that Laozi could control.

“Because in that case I could be more helpful for My Lord.”

Jin thought about it. Thinking about the fact that Reiko and Laozi were to monitor each other in case they ran rampant or something like that, so if Jin was to prepare a terminal like that wouldn’t Reiko’s superiority decrease.

“It doesn’t need to be as powerful as Reiko-san, just Ann’s power at most is enough.”

Laozi supplemented after seeing Jin’s hesitation. Even Jin thought that it’d probably be fine in that case, and approved of it.

“Alright. Do you have any wishes for the appearance?”

“Yes, the appearance of an elder befitting the name of Laozi, please.”

Certainly, right now on Hourai Island there were no golems that had the appearance of an old person.

“Got it. Leave it to me.”

Then Jin decided to promptly build the Automata for Laozi’s use.

The structure had Ann as the basis. The differences were that it was a male-type, and that there was no Control Core as the intelligence.

Instead he installed Magi Devices like a [Mana Telecam] and a [Remote] so that just Laozi could control it.

Therefore its power output reached 20% of Reiko’s at its maximum.

For its appearance, for a moment Jin thought to make it like a sage as it was Laozi, but in the end he decided on a butler’s appearance. It felt as if he had added Elsa’s butler Adberg and Reinhardt’s butler Claude together and then divided it with two.

This is confidential, but the reason Jin didn’t simply go with the appearance of a sage was that if it was too dignified it would make Jin nervous.



“One of the targets is taking independent action.”

“Excellent, secure them.”

“Understood.”



In the late afternoon, Jin returned from Hourai Island to Ikasanaato.

Because there was still some time until the evening, Jin thought he might go get hold of some armor, and so he walked downtown searching for shops that looked like they'd sell weapons and armor. But after a long search he couldn't find one. That was because in the first place full-body armor that knights would wear is made-to-order.

"I suppose I'll try asking Reinhardt for help later."

Jin gave up on that and returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER 6

To CELUROA KINGDOM

The next day, 6th of April.

In the morning, Jin and Reinhardt visited the room Elsa had stayed in.

“...”

“...”

“...”

No one spoke a word. They only silently gazed at the objects Elsa left behind, or possibly had no choice but to leave behind.

Among them was the doll Non Jin had given her a while ago.

It was a little dirty, however it wasn't dirt from neglect, but a result from all the times Elsa had brushed it or held it in her arms.

(So she left behind you too.)

Jin merely whispered in his heart and softly touched Non's head.

The dagger was also left behind. Looking at it Jin felt a little disappointed.

However, he was most of all surprised and worried that she had left the Ring of Protection behind.

Jin worried himself about why she had done that, as she must've known its usefulness. He had wished she had at least kept hold of this. That's why Jin picked up the ring and put it in his pocket.

After doing that, suddenly there was a knock on the door, and Elsa's elder brother Fritz came inside along with a subordinate of his.

“What, Reinhardt, you were still around.”

He said as soon as he saw Reinhardt's face.

“We were just about to leave.”

“Hmph, I see.”

Fritz said, surveyed the room, then turned to speak to the butler and the guard.

“Throw away your excess possessions. You guys will be under my jurisdiction for a while. I’ll think about whether I send you back to our country or not some other time.”

Fritz said and hit Non who was on top of the night table with his hand, making her fall.

“Uh-oh.”

Before she hit the floor, Jin caught her. Fritz watched it from the corner of his eyes and,

“Hmph.”

He snorted disdainfully and,

“Reinhardt, go already. I think you know this, but don’t say anything unnecessary.”

He said to Reinhardt, back-to-back with him.

“I know.”

With just a short reply, Reinhardt patted Jin’s shoulder and he left the place.

Jin followed after Reinhardt and left without looking back while carrying Non.

The butler Adberg and guard Herman lonesomely watched the two leave.



The same day at ten in the morning. Jin and Reinhardt rode their carriages and entered Celuroa Kingdom.

Because Reinhardt had gone through with the legalities, there was no problem passing through the border barrier.

The two spoke little words. Even so, they seemed to be enduring Elsa’s disappearance.

At two in the afternoon they arrived in the provincial city of Tellurs where they would spend the night.

In the back of Tellurs flowed a large river called Torres, and on the other side of it was the capital city Esaia.

The river Torres was over 200 meters wide, and there was no bridge. A ferry was the only way across. For that reason, ships were on a reservation system. There were few boats large enough to take carriages on board.

“Reinhardt-sama, I hear that there is one vacant reservation in three days.”

The butler Claude said apologetically.

“Is that so, well, no way around it. You reserved lodgings, right?”

Because there were many visitors waiting for ferries, it was necessary to have many inns.

“Yes, there is an adequate hotel with vacancies.”

And so first Jin’s group went to that hotel. It was surprisingly ten storeys tall, a rather tall building for this world. Jin’s groups rooms were on the sixth floor.

“Taking the stairs to the sixth floor seems really tiresome.”

Jin was thinking something like that, but surprisingly he was carried by golems.

“For its size, Celuroa Kingdom has relatively few people. That’s why golems are used in all sorts of places.”

Reinhardt explained.

It was Jin’s first time experiencing sitting on a golem’s arms being carried up some stairs. The invisibly following Reiko had a somewhat annoyed expression but of course it wasn’t seen.

“Ah, I can see the river.”

Being on the sixth floor meant that they could see the faraway river Torres from above the rooftops. Dozens of ferries were going back and forth. But all of them were small boats.

“Why don’t they make more large boats?”

Reinhardt caught the words Jin muttered to no one in particular.

"That's the kingdom's policy. The river Torres is a natural moat, you see. Immediately on the other side of the river is the royal capital Esaia. That's why private individuals aren't allowed to own boats that more than ten people can board. The boats large enough to use for carriages are all under the country's management."

Hearing that Jin wondered if the situation was similar to Ooi River's in the Edo Period. There even boats had been forbidden, and Jin remembered once seeing a scene in a period drama where travellers were carried across the river by people.

"Well, I guess there's nothing else to do than take it easy for three days."

The rooms reserved this time were four adjoined rooms. One was assigned for Reinhardt, and one for Jin. One for male servants like Claude, and the last one for female servants.

All the rooms were connected through doors, so the construction allowed them to come and go without going through the hallway.

Right now, Jin and Reinhardt were chatting in Reinhardt's room.

"Reinhardt, you had to stop here on your way through too, right?"

"Yeah. Because there's no other route than this."

Reinhardt said that it was Celuroa Kingdom's policy that there were no other ways to Egelia Kingdom than through here.

There was one more, a narrow road in the mountains, but it seems that because beasts and burglars appeared frequently only armed troops used used it. There didn't seem to be settlements that could provide supplies either.

"This town is fine, but on the other side of the river there are five ramparts, and without permission you can't get deeper than past the first rampart. Normal travellers walk the roads between the first and second rampart."

From Reinhardt's explanation Jin thought that the country appeared rather complicated.

The so-called ramparts were stone-built walls like the Great Wall of China that appeared to go on endlessly. There were five of them. What a waste of labor, Jin felt.

“Because I’m a diplomat and we’re going to approach Esaia, there’ll be no problems going through the ramparts until the fourth one. What’re we going to do?”

“Yeah, well, we don’t have to try too hard to get inside.”

No thanks to difficult things, Jin said to Reinhardt. Reinhardt seemed to be of the same opinion and,

“In that case, let’s use the road beyond the second rampart.”

He brought the topic to an end.

“The proper Esaia is inside the fifth rampart.”

They had spare time until dinner, and so Jin listened to Reinhardt tell the details about the ramparts.

“The space between the fifth and fourth ones is wide, and there’s a town there. Prosperous commoners live there. It could be said that for all the people except the nobles, that’s where Esaia is.”

“You mean that’s where you could enter without a problem, Reinhardt?”

“Well, that’s the case. So, the space between the fourth and third ones, that’s even wider. However, because that place is meant for holding back the enemy when the time comes, military drills and such are held there, it’s not a place with a very pleasant atmosphere.”

Having it explained to him, Jin nodded in understanding.

“Ah, so that’s why the highway is between the third and second ramparts.”

“That’s right. Because anyone can travel between the second and first ones, I hear the public order isn’t good. But that doesn’t mean I’ve witnessed it myself, though.”

That evening’s meal was lonelier than usual. Just by having no Elsa, the mood changed this much, Jin thought.

“I wonder what Elsa’s doing right now.”

Suddenly Jin spoke out by accident.

“Yeah, me too. Elsa’s happiness, I wonder what that is.”

Reinhardt threw back at him, apparently thinking about the same thing as Jin.

Jin had something he wanted to ask Reinhardt, so after the meal while drinking Teee,

“Reinhardt, can I ask you something?”

He started a conversation.

“Mh-hm, what is it?”

“About Elsa’s brother, Fritz, was it?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“Despite appearances, way back when he played together with Elsa, did he spoil her a lot?”

He asked because the brother had been too different from the image he had got in the town of Delead from the talk with Elsa about her playing with her brothers when she was a child.

Thereupon Reinhardt made a large nod and,

“Ah, I see.”

He said and began to explain.

“Fritz changed four years ago. It was the period after the previous king of Celuroa Kingdom had died, and the current king who succeeded him hadn’t yet solidified the foundation of his government.”

It hadn’t progressed to a war, but there had been battles larger than skirmishes, but smaller than wars, Reinhardt said.

“During the time he was a second lieutenant, and the enemy...Celuroa Kingdom’s national defence army took him as a prisoner of war. Eventually he was extricated in a prisoner exchange, but ever since then he’s been a different person.”

He became a power supremacist, or more precisely he began to pursue power in all

respects, Reinhardt said sadly.

"Until then he had been a good elder brother who doted on Elsa, though."

"I...see. That must've been difficult for Elsa."

The kind elder brother whom he had called a muscle-brain and made Elsa laugh was completely changed. It must've surely come like a bolt out of the blue.

Jin once more thought about what Elsa's happiness could be.

CHAPTER 7

UNEXPECTED REUNION

In a sense, you could call the provincial city of Tellurs the gateway to entering the royal capital Esaia.

Just why is the royal capital Esaia so close to the national border?

Originally Celuroa Kingdom was a very small country. After the Great Magic War and after Dinar Kingdom had split into smaller countries, Celuroa Kingdom which was built on top of the Dinar Kingdom's capital city's ruins, had its eighth king Roland the First command troops to fight a neighboring country.

During the war that lasted nearly ten years, Celuroa Kingdom annexed a neighboring country and added it to its territory. Similar acts of aggression were repeated for generations.

The annexed lands were in the north and east, west, and then southwest. That's the reason why the capital's location was lopsided.

Had Egelia Kingdom been annexed too, the location wouldn't be particularly strange.

Incidentally, during that time the southern Egelia Kingdom had fought stubbornly to the last, and to avoid the national power declining due to the prolonged war Roland the First made peace with Egelia Kingdom.

Since then there had been only small fights, but mostly the diplomatic relations have continued seemingly favourably. That is, until the events 18 years ago which Elsa's father participated in.

“Didn't Reinhardt say that the current king seemed a bit warlike...”

Jin muttered to himself while walking the streets of Tellurs.

There were two more days until they would board the ferry. Reinhardt had said he'd

try visiting a friend, while Jin went off on his own.

To distract himself from the frustration of being unable to find Elsa, for no particular reason he was strolling about town. The rays of the spring sun shone warmly, just perfectly for a walk.

After over an hour of walking, Jin was a little tired and sat down on a bench that the plaza facing the main street was furnished with.

“Sigh.”

The street traffic was large, and the place was lively. Parents with their children, families, pairs of lovers. Traders, nobles, elders, children. Many sorts of people were coming and going.

“Oh, it’s mister.”

“Hm?”

From somewhere he heard a voice. Turning towards it, there was a blue-eyed girl with blond hair like silk trailing down.

“Let’s see, you were.”

“I’m Schiede, mister.”

The girl he had met in the village with the mine, Yada Village. The young daughter of Viscount Secatt’s house.

“Oh, yes, you were Schiede-chan. What are you up to?”

After remembering, Jin smiled and spoke to her.

“Yes, the day before yesterday we went sightseeing in this town. Today we came to board a pleasure cruise on the river Torres.”

“Huh, a pleasure cruise. Was it fun?”

“It was. The river was very wide, blue, and the Mr. fishes were leaping.”

Schiede smiled and made hand gestures while she explained to Jin. Her behaviour was charming and just by listening Jin had fun too.

“So, why are you here? By yourself?”

Jin asked, and Schiede made a somewhat uncomfortable face.

“Um, that’s...Because I got separated from mother and the others.”

“Eeh?”

In other words, a lost child. Jin got up in a hurry, and looked around the riverbank. However, he didn’t see people similar to them.

“Your mother’s group is surely looking for you too, right? Oh yeah, do you know the hotel you’re staying in?”

“I do. It’s called ‘Green Bower Hotel’.”

“Green Bower Hotel...I wonder where it was.”

The name sounded familiar. Jin was thinking about it when a voice spoke close to his ear.

(Father, that hotel is on the street east of the intersection on this street.)

It was the invisible Reiko whispering into Jin’s ear.

“Let’s see, if I remember right that hotel is this way.”

While thanking Reiko, Jin began walking and leading Schiede by the hand.

“Thank you, mister. That miss is not with you today?”

By that miss, she must’ve meant Elsa. Indeed, she did use healing magic to heal Schiede’s wound after the girl fell over, Jin thought.

“Mmh, she’s doing something else right now.”

“Is that so? And I wanted to see her again.”

It appears after Elsa healed Schiede’s wound, she took a liking to her.

“Mh-hm, that may be difficult.”

“So after all, she can’t go outside so often because she’s a noble too?”

“Well, something like that.”

There was no way Jin could tell her the truth and so he dodged the question, while Schiede then said with a serious look on her face.

“That’s lonely. In that case, Schiede may as well stop being a noble.”

Those words made Jin think of something but,

“That’s no good, Schiede-chan. Your mother would be sad.”

He said to persuade her. Schiede meekly nodded.

“Yes, I understand. I don’t want to make mother sad.”

“Mmh, Schiede-chan’s a good girl.”

Jin said and stroked the air of Schiede walking next to him.

“Ehehe, that feels nice.”

Schiede delighted in having her hair stroked.

Meanwhile, they arrived in front of the hotel.

“Schiede!”

A hurried woman’s voice. It was Schiede’s mother, the wife of Viscount Secatt, Mariria.

“Mother!”

Mariria came running over and hugged Schiede.

“Where did you go! Edem and Hauro have been looking for you!”

Hauro was probably their butler, Jin thought idly while watching the meeting of parent and child.

“I’m sorry. On the main street I saw something interest on display, then mother and everyone else were gone, and mister brought me here.”

Then Mariria let go of Schiede whom she was holding and looked at Jin.

“Thank you very much for bringing Schiede back. ...Wait, aren’t you...?”

She appeared to remember Jin's face.

"Yes, we were sightseeing the mine tunnels in Yada Village at the same time, my name is Jin Nidou."

"My my, so it was you. You're by yourself today?"

"Yes, Reinhardt went to see an acquaintance of his."

"I see. I'd like to give you something as a token of my gratitude but as we're traveling I'm short of money at hand..."

And so forth, she spoke and that's why Jin felt all the more ashamed and,

"No, it wasn't such a big deal, well then, I'll be going now."

He said and bowed, and turning his back to the voices who still wanted him to stop for something, Jin quickly left the scene.

"Parent and child, huh. That sort of thing, isn't it nice."

While thinking about things like that in the back of his mind Jin kept casually walking and came to the riverside.

A riverbank about five meters tall had amassed along the river, and it was possible to climb it up. Jin who was a bit sweaty from walking tried climbing up the riverbank to for something like a breeze off the river.

"Hm? Something's causing a ruckus."

He climbed up the bank and could see the dry river bed, but there a group of people had gathered.

"Father, it looks like a drowned body or something."

Reiko told Jin while staying invisible. Reiko's eyesight was sharper than a falcon's. That's what Jin was thinking, but for the invisible Reiko using infrared rays to see it was difficult to discern faraway details so for a moment she had gone closer and come back.

"It is...I recognize it. It seems to be Mine."

“What!? Mine who was supposed to have run away with Elsa turned up as a drowned body!?”

Jin had a bad premonition and ran down the riverbank. He was about to slip and fall multiple times but each time Reiko supported him up so he got down without falling over.

After getting down on the riverbed Jin urgently rushed there.

From among the crowd of curious onlookers Jin said with a groan.

“It really is...Mine.”

It was unmistakably Mine. The only mistake was that it wasn’t a drowned corpse. She was still breathing.

“Out of the way please! I know her!”

Jin said and moved to Mine’s side and,

“Ugh...”

He grimaced at the terrible scene.

Her right arm appeared to be broken and bent in a weird direction, her head was swelled dark red as if she had been hit, and a knife had pierced through her abdomen.

CHAPTER 8

THE ESCAPE

Turning back time a little, to the night before Elsa and Mine disappeared. In one of the rooms of the hotel in provincial city Ikasanaato.

“...”

After returning to her own room Elsa wept without making a sound.

She knew Marquis Aizen. Because his grounds neighbored her family's and because he had also been her father's superior officer, he visited at times.

He had no hair on his head and a plump figure. It was said that before he retired from military service he had a toned body, but Elsa couldn't imagine it.

Previously when Beana was proposed to by Earl Kuzuma, Beana had asked Elsa how she felt about marriage with Jin.

Elsa remembered thinking at that time that while she did like Jin, marrying and living together with him was unimaginable.

“But that man is...”

She hated him. She hated being around him. She would hate being married to someone like that even more. Just being looked at by him gave her the chills. Elsa could do nothing but bite her lip and cry.

However, being born a daughter to a noble's house, she had to obey her father's orders. Not to mention that in the case of a marriage proposal beneficial to the house, everyone must've rejoiced. With the exception of just one person, Elsa herself.

At that moment, there was a knock on the door.

“...”

Elsa did not respond, the door softly opened, and Mine entered.

“Young lady.”

“...”

Despite Elsa not responding,

“You don’t have to say it. You most certainly hate this marriage with the Marquis, right?”

Mine said. Elsa reflexively looked at Mine’s face.

“I understand. Because you’re the young lady that I’ve watched over since you were a baby.”

Mine smiled kindly, and tenderly hugged Elsa’s head.

“Mine...”

In the end Elsa became unable to hold back her emotions and called Mine’s name. Simultaneously she began to cry a second time and,

“Mine, Mine...”

For a while Elsa stayed like that crying into Mine’s chest.

When Mine estimated that Elsa had calmed down a little, she spoke.

“Young lady, you have two paths available to you. One path is to stay as a noblewoman and marry the Marquis. The other one is to throw away your status as a noble and earn the freedom to decide for yourself.”

“Freedom, to decide, for myself?”

That stirred Elsa and she raised her head.

“Yes. Common people like me assuredly have less rules than nobles. That way there are also hardships, but it’s the difference between hardships pushed onto you and hardships you yourself chose. There’s no telling which one would be the best no matter what, but don’t you think that it’s as well to choose your own hardship?”



Mine's tempting took time.

The truth was that while waiting for the day when they would arrive in this town that was near her birthplace, Mine had secretly made many preparations. To run away with Elsa.

However, if Elsa were to sneak away of her own volition, Mine would gladly say there was no greater fortune she could wish for.

Using sophistry, using schemes, Mine was trying to make Elsa receptive for the idea.



"Freedom, to decide, for myself."

Once more Elsa repeated it.

"You may not meet Reinhardt-sama again. Because he's a noble. But Jin-sama is a commoner. Maybe in one or two years if things calm down you could meet him."

Mine added. You could call it clever. She skillfully provoked Elsa's feelings of worry, or no, feelings of something like pining towards Jin.

"If it's Jin-kun, then surely..."

Were she to meet with Jin, just Jin by himself could maybe arrange her to meet Reinhardt. Elsa held a hope like like that.

Then before she knew it, she nodded to Mine.

"I'll go."

Elsa said only that, then Mine hugged her once again and,

"Young lady! So you've firmly made up your mind. Mine will protect young lady even if costs me my life."

She said and gently brushed Elsa's back.



That night, the two vanished.

They put on commoners' clothing Mine had surreptitiously prepared and snuck out of the back door.

No one at all was expecting Elsa to run away, and so there weren't anything like lookouts keeping watch.

There were soldiers guarding the place, but it's not like they were there all the time, instead they only made periodical patrols and because of that it hadn't been difficult to run away while they were gone.

They left behind all accessories that would immediately reveal that she was a noble, bulky objects, and everything unnecessary. The dagger and the ring included.

Because she had taken the ring off, by the time they noticed it they were no longer in a situation where they could go back to get it. However, the truth was that Mine who knew about the items she had received from Jin had purposefully done that.

(But, just this is.)

Elsa had secretly hid the brooch she had got from Jin as a birthday present in her breast pocket.

Mine led Elsa who had wanted to take the dagger too by the hand, and Elsa walked into the night with some reluctance.

The only ones who saw them were Pansy and Lily of the SP. But as it did not involve Jin, just like that without doing anything they watched the two leave.



Mine who had saved most of her pay as a nanny for this day had told Elsa to not worry about money right now, so she ran with nearly nothing but the clothes she wore.

Mine's parents' home was in the town of Sasad next to Ikasanaato. They were relatively affluent merchants, but as they'd likely be the first ones searched she had no intention of relying on them.

In the dark, they went to the place of 'Mr. Handy' whom Mine had hired. She had already made contact with him for the journey out, in that sense things were going as planned.

"Hey there, welcome. So, she that young lady ye mentioned?"

"That's right. I brought her out today. Please proceed as planned."

"Got it, got it."

Mine who had originally intended to run off with Elsa from Ikasanaato already had escape plans prepared.

"Well, there's not enough time left tonight. Wontcha stay here 'til tomorrow night? What, they ain't finding ye here, no way, so relax."

Mr. Handy said and guided Elsa and Mine to a room with beds. It was a room that could be reliably locked from the inside. The two were mentally tired and so they immediately fell asleep.

The next day they waited until dusk to act. The hours were long. When the two got out of Mr. Handy's hideout they looked exhausted.

First, they rode horses northeast.

Other than going through Ikasanaato, there were other ways to get into Celuroa Kingdom. Although most of those ways were illegal.

There was a narrow path through the mountains between Celuroa Kingdom and Egelia Kingdom, people from underground businesses went back and forth on that path, and now Elsa and Mine rode horses through that path.

The path only as wide as the tracks on it meandered through the mountains. The ridgelines marked the border, and here and there were stakes in the ground marking the boundary. These stakes were Magi Tools that would sound an alarm if a human passed between two stakes.

For that reason their manufacturing method was a secret. Well, if Jin saw them he could probably quickly analyze their entire structure.

"Let's-a stay here for the night."

Near the border there was a small hut. It was a location ‘Mr. Handy’ used in times like these.

Mine and Elsa were tired from riding horses in the midnight darkness, and so as told they wrapped themselves in blankets handed to them.

“...It’s not tasty.”

“Young lady, please endure for just a bit longer.”

The two satisfied their hunger with bread and soup Mr. Handy had prepared. The taste was of course irrelevant, so Elsa accidentally voiced her dissatisfaction.

This day’s plan was to pass through the border opened by ‘Mr. Through’ into the vicinity of Celuroa Kingdom, and wait for the night in a hut that commanded a view of River Torres from up high.

The person called ‘Mr. Through’ was a middle-aged magus who could, using the help of a Magi Tool, erect a tunnel of sorts between the stakes in a place wide enough for it.

Going through that tunnel, Elsa and Mine were able to peacefully pass the border without the stakes sounding an alarm.

“Now, next is descending the mountain to the river, where with the help of ‘Mr. Ferry’ ye’ll cross over to Celuroa Kingdom’s subcentral district where ye simply can’t be found by pursuers, I hope.”

Mr. Handy who came with them said so to the two, then guided them to hut up high that from which River Torres could be viewed.

“Wontcha wait here patiently ’til the night.”

Mr. Handy said and went out. Left behind, Elsa and Mine exchanged glances.

“Young lady, just a little longer. Once we cross the river, there’s no need to be afraid of pursuers any longer. Let’s rent a house where we two can live together.”

“Mm.”

Mine affectionately hugged Elsa who seemed to be worn out from the journey. Elsa fell

asleep just like that. Mine looked at Elsa's sleeping face and,

"My darling child. I'll protect you no matter what it takes."

She said and gently combed Elsa's hair that reached her forehead with her fingers.

The outside gradually darkened, and before long the awaited night came.

"Come on, let's-a-go."

Mr. Handy said, and opened the hut's door. It was already pitch black outside.

"Watch yer step."

He said, but even so with just the moonlight it was fairly difficult. After falling over multiple times Elsa and Mine got down to the riverbed.

There there was a single boat.

"That's 'Mr. Ferry'."

The figure on board bowed their head a bit.

"Thank you for your trouble."

Mine said to Mr. Handy and gave him a pouch of gold coins.

"Hehe, well then, be well."

After confirming the contents of the pouch Mr. Handy forced a smile and disappeared into the night.

"Young lady, come now."

Mine led Elsa by the hand to the boat to board it. It was a small boat which five people could board.

First Elsa got on the boat. Mr. Ferry lent a hand, and Elsa safely got on board.

Then Mine got on board, and immediately the boat departed from the shore and began heading towards the opposite shore. Mr. Ferry moved the boat with an object similar

to a ‘paddle’

“Now you need just wait until we arrive at the other shore.”

Mine let out a large sigh, gently put her hand around Elsa’s shoulder, and said.

This world’s moon is small. Nevertheless, in the moonlight the river’s surface glittered with countless of reflections like silver sand. Elsa was absentmindedly gazing at it.

The boat slowly kept on crossing the river.

CHAPTER 9

TRAGEDY

The boat Mine and Elsa were on appeared to have gone about third of the way across the river.

Suddenly, Mr. Ferry, the ferryman, stopped rowing the boat. The boat ceased moving forwards, and began to drift downstream with the current. Although, the current in River Torres was slow. It was only a fourth or so of a person's walking speed.

"What is the matter?"

Mine looked puzzled and asked,

"Hehehehe..."

The ferryman had a filthy look on his face. Mine had a bad feeling about it and unintentionally gripped Elsa's shoulder harder.

"!?"

Elsa was then suddenly bent backwards. Mine looked, and it appeared that in the boat there was another man hiding, who crammed something in Elsa's mouth.

"Young lady!"

"Hehehe, this lady seems like a magic user, so. If she can't chant then she ain't no different."

"W-why you!"

Mine took out a knife hidden in her bosom.

"Uh-oh, that's dangerous."

But the ferryman struck Mine's hand with his paddle.

"Ouch!"

The hit caused Mine to drop the knife. Her wrist was bent and dangling. The bone

seemed to have broken.

"The old lady can go to sleep."

The ferryman again took the paddle and hit Mine's head. There was a dull sound and,

"Young...la....dy."

Right after those words Mine lost consciousness.

"!!!!"

Elsa tried to raise her muted voice and struggle, but on top of being unable to chant magical invocation because of the rag stuffed in her mouth, her hands were twisted behind her back, and because of the pain struggling became impossible.

"Hoheheh, that went well, don't it?"

"Right, I said tonight's guest is a noble's daughter, so she's some quality we ain't had in a long time."

The ferryman didn't just secretly bring people across the river, sometimes he kidnapped them like this and sold them off somewhere. Elsa was today's spoils.

"How about we first get a taste ourselves."

"Yeah, it ain't often you get a chance like this."

The man who was twisting Elsa's arm used something like handcuffs to fix Elsa's arms where they were.

Elsa moaned from the pain of her twisted shoulder and elbow. But the men only grinned and looked down on her.

"Hehehe, how does it feel to be done in by the commoners you normally make light of, miss noble?"

"Even commoners can amount to this much, ya know."

(That's not it, I don't make light of commoners.)

Even though Elsa wanted to say so, she could not.

The ferryman came over and grabbed hold of Elsa's breasts.

(That feels, bad.)

Elsa tried to turn her body to escape from his hands but,

"Don't struggle too much or ye'll fall off the boat."

He said and the other man straddled on top of Elsa's stomach.

(Agh, it, hurts.)

Without being able to push over the weight of a grown man, and having even her breathing become agonizing, Elsa's resistance gradually weakened.

"Oh? Ye done resisting already? In that case, let's get down to business now."

The ferryman said and licked his lips.

(No, someone, help, me.)

Elsa desperately yelled, but due to the rag stuffed in her mouth what came out were only moans.

"Uhehe, still growing aren't they, these breasts."

While saying so, the ferryman reached for Elsa's breasts.

(Rai, nii...Jin, kun...)

They who usually saved Elsa weren't around anymore. Because she had run away from them.

"Elsa!"

At that moment, Mine who had woken up bumped into the ferryman with all of her weight, the ferryman fell inside the boat, and Elsa felt relieved.

"Tch, she's already awake, huh."

The other man who was straddling Elsa said annoyedly and picked up the knife Mine had dropped some time ago. The knife's edge shone in the moonlight.

(Don't tell me? Mine, run!)

Elsa who wanted to say so but couldn't was only able to watch as the knife was plunged into Mine's abdomen.

(No, no, Mine...)

"Ugh, ah...Ergh, I..."

Mine slowly collapsed.

"After I toss her into the river I can take you on nice and slow, right miss Elsa?"

The ferryman said and gripped Mine's legs, and threw her into the river off the side of the boat.

(No, no, no...)

Elsa despaired, and at that moment.

"Uh!?"

Suddenly a light was shined on the men.

"T, this can't be!"

"A black patrol boat?"

It was this river's high-speed boat, the so-called patrol boat. It had three golems operating its oars, while normal boats had one. It could go five times faster than them.

The ferryman hadn't noticed its pitch-black hull at all. For that reason he hadn't noticed them come close, he thought. However, the truth was that it had been because of [Hide] magic.

"P-please forgive us."

"T-that's right! Didn't you promise us you'd overlook up to five people a month!?"

It appeared that the ferryman had some kind of a backroom deal with the Celuroa Kingdom's guards, and he desperately talked about it, but the people on board the black patrol boat maintained their silence. Looking closely, they were all wearing black clothes and black masks.

"H-hey, is it 'cuz messing with nobles is forbidden? I ain't done nothing! I didn't screw her yet! So please forgiv—"

That's where it needed. For an instant there was the glint of a blade, and the ferryman's head separated from his shoulders and fell into the river.

"!"

As blood spewed in front of her, Elsa closed her eyes.

"M-me too? No! Nooo!"

The man who was straddling Elsa yelled while he was about to jump into the river to escape.

His back was struck by the wind-type magic [Wind Slash].

"Ugh, ah..."

Having his back cut open all the way to his spine, the man fell off the boat into the river just like that.

"..."

The tragedy that occurred in front of her was far too graphic, Elsa didn't at all get the feeling that she had been saved.

However, the masked people of the black patrol boat silently moved Elsa from the small boat to the patrol boat, then released her hands from the device restraining them.

Elsa who was finally freed from the arm pain was about to take out the rag in her mouth herself.

"Hold on, before you do that let's put this on you."

The first time they spoke was accompanied with a ruthless act.

"Eh?"

Something like a choker was clasped around Elsa's neck, and as soon as she heard the metallic clank she realized that in spite of having taken out the rag, she still could not speak.

“...!”

“Hm, a little tight, is it? Hold on a bit. ...How about now?”

The man in front of her appeared to have done something, and she became able to speak, although it was difficult.

“Who, are, you? Didn’t, you, save, me?”

Elsa said after great pains, then the man in front of her grinned widely enough that it was visible beyond the mask and,

“We did save you, Miss Elsa. As long as you cooperate with us, we can have you get more comfortable.”

He said. After hearing that Elsa frowned. But, then she remembered Mine.

“Mine! Sa, ve, Mine.”

She asked them.

“Mine? Ah, you mean that turncoat of a maid.”

The man looked around the small boat, but Mine was nowhere to be seen on the river.

“Drifted away, or sunk. In either case we’re better off without a someone disloyal enough to run away with their master’s daughter. Ignore her.”

He said, giving orders to his subordinates.

“Yes sir.”

Hearing that Elsa went white as a sheet and,

“N-no, p, lea, se, I, beg, you.”

She begged with a strained voice. However, the man ignored Elsa and her pleas. Furthermore, he had Elsa’s hands and legs restrained once more.

“If we stay stopped in these waters for too long the guards will find us and it’ll be a problem. We’ve achieved our goal. Let’s withdraw.”

The man who appeared to be the leader ordered, and the black patrol boat left the

place at high speed.

Left behind was only the small boat with the ferryman's headless corpse in it.

CHAPTER 10

MEDICAL TREATMENT

Mine was seriously injured and on the verge of death. To begin with, Jin used healing magic.

“[Cure].”

Anyhow, it looked like there wasn’t a moment to waste. It was good that the knife stuck in her abdomen hadn’t come out. If it had come out in the river, there would’ve probably been major bleeding due to the added water pressure.

“[Cure].”

Jin gave first-aid by piling up healing magic.

He confirmed that Mine was still breathing and,

“Is there a doctor...A healer around this area?”

He asked the curious onlookers that had gathered.

“There’s a place a bit downtown from here.”

One of them said, and,

“Excuse me, but could someone go over there and call that person to help?”

Jin then said, but,

“Oh, I’ve got errands to do though.”

“I’ve got to be home soon.

“I can’t.”

And so forth, everyone said, leaving Jin by himself. Actually, just the middle-aged woman who had told Jin about the healer’s location stayed behind.

“What a heartless bunch...”

Jin muttered and,

“That was to be expected. From the start, the people living on this street are a mixed bag, you see.”

The woman said.

“But more importantly, we ought to take out this knife.”



As soon as she said that, she pulled out the knife in one go.

“!”

It must've been painful, as Mine who was thought to be unconscious spasmed a little.

“What are you-!”

“[Heal].”

But without a moment's delay the woman chanted Shouro Empire-style healing magic, keeping bleeding at its minimum.

“If you let something long like that stay in for a long time, it becomes unremovable, you see.”

This was because the muscle tissue would twine around it and stick to it.

“You are?”

Jin was impressed by her skills.

“Oh, I'm that healer, Sally Milsson.”

It turned out that luckily the healer had been among the onlookers.

“But this is a problem. It'll be tough carrying this wounded fellow with just the two of us. Tough mainly in the sense that it'll impact her health.”

“Leave it to me. ...Reiko, go over there for a bit and call ‘Elm’ and ‘Ash’ of the SP here.”

“Yes.”

As removing [Stealth] here would be too suspicious, the invisible Reiko gave a short reply and went behind a tree growing on the riverbed where she summoned Elm and Ash.

“Sister, you called?”

At first, the SP also called Jin ‘Father’ and Reiko ‘Elder Sister’, but while on duty they had been made sure to call Jin ‘Chief’ and Reiko ‘Sister’. This was one of Jin's strange ideas.

"Please act according to Father's instructions for the time being. Thank you for your hard trouble."

"Yes, Sister."

Then Reiko came back along with Elm and Ash.

"Good work. Elm and Ash, please carefully lift her up and carry her. For the destination, just follow us."

"Yes, Chief."

Sally Milsson was surprised seeing the two golems obeying Jin's orders.

"You're terrific, huh. Having two golems as fine as these. But it's a big help. Well then, please raise her gently."

Elm and Ash put their hands under Mine's unmoving body and carefully lifted her. It was imperative that they carry her while maintaining as much as possible a posture that didn't affect the wound in her abdomen.

"That's right, now follow me please."

Following Sally they crossed the riverbank into downtown. Although Elm and Ash could be said to be unusual, in a town where plenty of golems were used daily they did not catch many gazes from the passers-by.

"It's to the right of that corner. Ah, there, see."

Sally's healing clinic was a three minutes' walk away from the riverbank. On the small door 'Milsson Healing Clinic' was written.

"Yes yes, go over there and lay her down, mh-hm, that'll do."

They laid Mine down on the examination table and Sally immediately started her medical exam.

"Bones broken in the right wrist and arm, huh. The stomach wound is...Hey you, step out for a moment."

She was about to take off Mine's clothes when her hands stopped, and she advised Jin.

"Ah, yes."

Jin escaped along with Reiko to the neighboring room that was similar to a preparation room. Then,

“Reiko, try contacting Laozi. See if he can detect Elsa’s whereabouts.”

“Yes, understood.”

For a while Reiko was silent, contacting Hourai Island with her internal ManaCom.

Then after about two minutes.

“Got it. There appears to be two similar responses. One is in Ikasanaato. The other is in a location 20 kilometers upstream of River Torres.”

After hearing that, Jin made a guess.

“Hm. The reaction in Ikasanaato is most likely the dagger that was left behind. So in that case, the other reaction would appear to be Elsa.”

At that moment he heard Sally call him from the other room. Jin quickly returned to the treatment room.

“What’s wrong?”

Sally was standing there with a grim look on her face.

“It’s critical. I removed the knife. Closed the wound. Expelled the water she breathed in. Healed the fractures too. However...”

Jin took a look at Mine’s face. It was a bloodless white. Jin guessed that most likely the knife wound reached her internal organs. He had heard that because the liver, the spleen, and such had high concentrations of blood vessels, stopping bleeding there was difficult.

Jin judged that to be the case from the lessons about on-site first-aid which he had once taken during his time as a factory worker. Probably in this world that didn’t have surgical techniques wounds in internal organs were fatal.

“At this rate...She’s in danger.”

Sally had an extremely sad expression on her. As expected, not being able to save a patient must bitter.

“If only there was... Restorative medicine...”

“Restorative medicine?”

“Yeah. But drink-type medicine is highly expensive. Alchemists in themselves are scarce, so it can’t be helped, but if only we could have her drink some of that there would be a chance.”

Jin had the experimental restorative medicine in his pocket. But it was still a trial product, and without making human experiments it would forever stay that way.

“What are her chances if recovery if she stays like this?”

Jin asked, just in case. After thinking about it for a little while, Sally replied,

“Not even one in ten. More precisely, at this rate if she doesn’t return to consciousness she’s as good as gone.”

Jin stopped worrying and took the restorative medicine out of his pocket.

“There’s something like a restorative medicine in here, but I don’t know how effective it is.”

He said honestly and,

“Let me see.”

He handed it to Sally, who then seemed to study it in various ways. Finally,

“[Analyse].”

She used analysis magic. Because this magic couldn’t analyze things one had no understanding of it would be pointless for Jin to use, but in the case of Sally,

“Y-you! Where did you get this!?”

She excitedly moved closer to press Jin for an answer. Jin assessed the situation and,

“Is it effective? If that’s the case then leave that talk for later, please use it!”

He said. Being told that, Sally blushed a little and nodded.

“R-right. It’s as you say. I’ll do it at once.”

She said, poured about a third of the contents into a feeding cup, and held it to Mine's mouth.

"Please drink it..."

About half of the liquid in the cup was spilled, but somehow she was able to have her drink the other half.

Doing so, the result was dramatic.

A red tinge appeared in her once-white face, and her disordered breath turned back to normal.

Sally examined Mine's pulse from her wrist too and,

"Mh-hm, it seems she's no longer in danger."

She said and breathed a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER 11

IN PURSUIT

To stabilize Mine's condition, Sally had her drink one more mouthful of the remaining medicine.

This time she managed to have Mine drink the whole thing without spilling it.

"Sigh, she should be fine now. Now we just wait and see."

Now Mine was breathing calmly.

"She seems to have also suffered considerable mental damage, so it will take some time until she wakes up."

Sally said and so,

"Doctor, could I have Mine hospitalized here for a while?"

Jin tried asking.

Sally replied,

"Mh-hm, this is a house of healing so I don't mind. However, as a healer, I would like you to tell me about that medicine."

And she brought out her bargaining point. Well, the topic was going to come up no matter what so,

"Sure, alright. I made that medicine."

Jin replied honestly. He thought this healer Sally was somehow trustworthy. She was a woman, but she gave off the same impression as Reinhardt and himself.

"You made it!? Are you an alchemist?"

Sally was astonished.

"No, I'm a Magi Craftsman. I heard of the recipe of the restorative medicine from somewhere, so I made one as an experiment."

“Whawhawha-what? You heard of the recipe? You heard of the recipe that’s more valuable than life to alchemists?”

Sally was even more astonished. Oops, Jin thought, and decided to alter the story.

“No, the one I heard it from was an Automata, you see. Not only that, but one from the times of the Great Magic War.”

“Whaaat?”

Sally was well surprised. Jin had thought she’d be calm and collected, but maybe she was unexpectedly an easily excited person.

“The old Automata, see, after telling me that they completely stopped working, and that was the only thing I heard. Furthermore, the information was incomplete.”

Jin then just told her that he had made the medicine by using healing magic to charge the serum of a devil beast, which he had made by settling some of the blood he had had on hand. The centrifuge and the like would’ve been difficult to explain and so he omitted them.

“Hmm, so it was that kind of technique you say.”

However, despite that Sally appeared to have had some kind of an inspiration, and while grumbling she ruminated over the recipe.

“I can’t get my hands on a devil beast’s blood...But isn’t there something better than a devil beast...What’s important is the included Magic Energy...In that case...”

“Excuse me, doctor.”

Jin was irritated at Sally who was immersed her own world with no sign of returning, and he called out to her in a quite loud voice. Even more than Mine, he was worried about Elsa.

“Hm! Wh-what is it?”

“Mine will be fine now, right?”

“Mh-hm. As long as she recovers like this she should be fine.”

Hearing that, Jin made up his mind.

"Sorry about this, but could I trouble you to keep an eye on her here until she's well?"

"Hm? I don't mind, but there seems to be some story here."

Sally said, and Jin summarized the story of Elsa and Mine to her.

"Hmm, she ran away with someone's daughter. And got attacked midway, I suppose."

"Huh. Well, I can't think of anything else that might've happened."

"And so I guess as far as her employer is concerned, she can't go back to him."

"Because she'll be punished, I see."

Sally thought about it for a while then,

"I understand. I'll look after her for a while, why not until her health improves. It's the least I can do after you told me about the restorative medicine."

She said undertook the task.

Jin bowed and,

"Thank you, doctor. So, here's the payment for the time being."

He said and handed over three gold coins, that is, 30000 Torr.

"This is way too much..."

Sally started to say, but then guessed that it must also include the money for keeping quiet and accepted it without saying anything else.



As Jin didn't have to worry about Mine for the time being, he hurried back to the hotel. It was already evening, but it seemed that Reinhardt still hadn't returned. He then decided he'd leave a message.

"Could you please tell Reinhardt that there's something I'm a little worried about so I'll go check on it, and that he doesn't have to worry about me."

He asked the butler Claude to convey that to Reinhardt, left Ann in his room, and under the darkening skies he departed looking for Elsa.

Time was precious. It would be good if he had the golem horse Koma, but it couldn't pass through the carriage's Warp Gate. With no other option, he detached a horse golem from the carriage and straddled it. As there was no saddle it was unsteady, but as time was of the priority he endured it.

His destination was upstream of River Torres.

Jin decided to call the Air Force for backup when it's needed.

Sky units from 71 to 75 were defending Jin, while Raptor units from one to five had the duty of staying on alert at a high altitude. They would probably arrive by the end of Jin's 20-kilometer journey.

"Oh, but the bottleneck is that landing will be difficult."

Although it was this late, Jin noticed a flaw in his plan.

"If I'm not mistaken there was something called a VTOL aircraft. Once I go back I should try building one..."

While thinking that, Jin moved in the evening's darkness. The golem horse's back just shook and he was concerned about Elsa, but on the other hand his head was filled with idle thoughts.

"Reiko has been strengthened, but my own body hasn't at all been. I really must finish making some personal equipment soon."

Night vision goggles to see in the dark, or the power suit whose development came to a halt midway, or something. Jin's thoughts had no end.

"Oh, if Reiko could fly too that'd be great."

He came up with that, which would result in her becoming unstoppable by anyone.

This was in a sense backlash from his reservation.

Jin wasn't a pacifist in particular. On the other hand, he wasn't quick to quarrel either. Basically he went easy on his friends, and had no mercy for his enemies. Although, that's probably how most people are.

Jin wasn't particularly fond of Mine. She'd complain at the drop of a hat, if pushed he'd describe her as weak-headed.

However, while that may be true, Jin wasn't as cold-hearted as to just silently overlook how she had been treated. All the more now that he had been told she was Elsa's real mother.

He'd track down Elsa and settle the debts with whoever made Mine suffer through that. That's what Jin was thinking.

However, he didn't realize that "whoever made mine suffer through that" was no longer in this world.

"...So tiring."

Jin was worn out by the saddleless and continuously shaking golem horse's back.

"Ahh, having a motorbike would be more comfortable. Even a bicycle would be fine. I'll make one later."

It seemed that the shackle of Jin's so-called restraint had leapt into another dimension.

"Father, are you okay? Would you like me to carry you?"

Reiko asked with concern, but having a 130-centimeter girl carry him in her arms or on her back to his destination was too shameful for Jin and he refused the proposal.

"Is that so? If you get tired, please tell me so."

"Yeah."

He replied, but the chances of Jin voicing his complaints to Reiko were rather low. It was about the dignity of a father.

In the first place he wasn't too tired to walk, just tired of the saddleless horse's shaking, and so walking would pose no problem.

In addition, he couldn't go fast. Right now, the SP were going ahead in the direction of travel while on the lookout, so he couldn't go any faster.

As the enemy base drew near, he had to slow down for the sake of cautiously getting

near it.

He was worried about Elsa's safety, but Jin judged that supposing he was seen, Elsa would very likely be in even more danger, and so he restrained himself from acting rashly.

Any time now he'd be a short distance away from the destination. He had to make ensure the enemy didn't suspect anything.

Until now he had traveled the to the side of the highway, but finally he decided to take the path where there was no road.

"Father, to make it more efficient, should I have the SP go ahead as outriders?"

To push his way through the bushes he would need to use substantial strength. That's why she mentioned having the SP go ahead as outriders, or in other words cutting and clearing the way through bushes. Of course, with utmost silence and secrecy.

"Right, go ahead and do that."

And so it was arranged that Dahlia and Canna of the SP showed themselves and led them. The other members were wary of the surroundings. Reiko was closest to Jin protecting him, and they carried on.

After about fifteen minutes, Dahlia who had been going ahead stopped moving.

"Chief, there is a building."

Just as she reported, if you looked closely, in the darkness there indeed was something like a stronghold.

"I can indeed feel the Magic Energy of the brooch Father made."

Reiko said. In the brooch Jin had gifted Elsa were small Magi Crystal studdings, which had his Magic Energy in them.

That's why Reiko was able to perceive its existence at this distance.

"Well, let's finally get to the infiltration."

Jin said, but,

"Father, there is no need for you to do it yourself. The SP is for times like this. Just give

them the order."

Reiko rebuked him.

That made Jin feel vaguely ashamed, but it was true that Jin's corporeal strength was low.

"Alright, then I'll command you. First track down Elsa. Do not be found."

"Yes, Chief."

Without a sound, the SP disappeared in the direction of the stronghold. Jin thought while watching it.

(It might be interesting to make a magical puppet that moves according to my will.)

Despite thinking it a bit imprudent, even at this occasion Jin thought about craftsmanship.

CHAPTER 12

ELSA'S CRISIS

The men who kidnapped Elsa kept moving upstream, and eventually the boat arrived at the left bank of the river.

“We'll be having you blindfolded from here on out.”

“...”

Elsa was blindfolded and carried by the men. Elsa who no longer had any energy to resist was at the mercy of the men.

After about thirty minutes it appeared they had reached some place, as she noticed that the atmosphere had changed. The air was a little smelly and moist. It was like entering a closed room.

Her blindfold was taken off. Elsa also noticed that her leg and arm restraints had disappeared.

“Well, it's better that you rest for a bit.”

Turning around to that voice, Elsa saw a black-masked man outside sturdy-looking iron bars. Judging from his voice it was the same man from earlier who had attached the choker to prevent Elsa from chanting.

“The day will dawn soon. At that time, I'm sure the branch head himself will talk to you personally.”

Behind him was a man who appeared to be one of his subordinates, and he handed over a wooden cup of water and bread on a plate through the space between the bars.

“Now, it's not much but it's for you to eat.”

He said and the men left. Left alone, Elsa tried to once more look around the room.

Walls in three directions, the floor, and the ceiling all made out of sturdy-looking stone.

The remaining direction had iron bars. It appeared awfully inescapable.

Putting a hand on her neck, she felt that the metal choker bit into it. Even though she tried to remove it, it seemed very unlikely for it to come off.

Elsa gave up on removing the choker, and simply drank the water.

Then she lay down on the hard floor.

She was feeling too much wretched, and tears came flowing.

“Rai, nii...Jin, kun...”

Her older cousin who always supported her and came to her rescue, and her friend who made one thing after another that nobody was capable of copying.

Just why didn't she talk to them before running away? That was her only regret.

The tired Elsa fell into a shallow sleep there and then.

She must've dozed for a few hours. Elsa woke up to a voice calling for her. Her whole body ached from sleeping on the hard floor.

“The branch head has summoned you. Come.”

Once again Elsa's both arms and legs were restrained. The restraints this time were two chains 30 centimeters or so long that tied her left and right together.

So if she moved her right arm her left arm would move, and if she raised her left leg her right leg would be pulled.

In other words, her current status didn't allow for any but small movements.

Taken out from the prison in that condition, as she wasn't used to it Elsa kept almost falling over but didn't while she kept walking. Black-masked men were in all directions.

She climbed up a long staircase, and walked across a long hallway to the end. The man walking in front of her opened a heavy-looking door.

“Go in.”

“Ow.”

Pushed by the man behind her, Elsa fell over. She trust her hands forward to defend her face from impact, but the knees she hit on the floor hurt.

“Oh my, you shouldn’t treat a lady like that.”

Someone said with a slimy voice, and Elsa looked up. In the room was a gaudy chair, and on that a man was sitting looking down at her.

That man was the only one without a black mask or black clothes. On the contrary, his garments were conspicuously white: he had put on a white robe and a long cloak.

“Can you stand? Sorry, eh, my subordinates aren’t aware of how to treat a lady, eh. I’ll warn them later so please forgive me.”

His words were courteous, but his tone had an indescribably unpleasant feeling to it. Elsa slowly stood up.

“Oh my, your knees are bleeding, eh. [Cure].”

He cast healing magic and the wounds on Elsa’s knees recovered.

“This should be fine. Now then, from the top, welcome, Miss Randol. It’s a pleasure.”

The man said and Elsa took another close look at him.

She couldn’t quite tell whether he was in his 20s or in his 30s. He had a smooth white face and grey hair. His grey eyes were narrow, and within them madness seemed to be showing through.

His body was long and thin. He was even slimmer than Reinhardt. He was tall enough that you could recognize while he was still sitting.

“I’m, no, longer, Randol. I, abandoned, that, name.”

Still the choker pressured her throat, making her voice not come out well.

“Oh, I see. According to my subordinates’ report, it appears that you ran away to Celuroa Kingdom together with your nanny, eh?”

The man said with a wide, serpentlike grin.

"Excuse me for my manners, I am the branch head of the eighth subdivision of the Unifilers, my name is Purcell Marces D'Canagerion."

So this was a base of the Unifilers, Elsa thought, feeling dread once more. However, she hid it, and pondered about the name she had just heard.

"Are you, a noble, of, Celuroa, Kingdom?"

Celuroa Kingdom's nobles accepted convention for introductions was given name – surname (house name) – d' – posthumous name (territory name).

"Oh my, so you know. M'lady is rather wise."

His flattery combined with his expression only gave Elsa feelings of disgust.

"Now then, before we get down to business."

Purcell ordered his subordinates to have Elsa sit on a simple chair.

"It's not proper to have a lady stand around for a long time, you see."

He said, and then finally cut to the chase.

"Now then, first of all the reasons we've invited you, there's two of them. Well, actually, maybe I should say there's three?"

Say whatever suits your fancy, Elsa thought while staring at Parcell's feet.

"Number one. As a restraint against Reinhardt-dono. This one's already taken care of, eh?"

"Huh?"

Elsa wondered for a moment what's the connection between Reinhardt and her, but then realized that if her gentle cousin knew she had been taken hostage, maybe he'd be obliged to work for the interest of the Unifilers.

"Number two. That mysterious Magi Craftsman who suddenly appeared. Jin Nidou, was it, eh? We'd like to know every detail about him and the golems who are with him."

In other words, they would extract information about Jin who ruined the Unifilers' plans from Elsa who's been together with him.

"I, don't, know. Even if, I did, I wouldn't, tell."

Elsa made a brief proclamation while glaring at Purcell.

"...Number three. You're an excellent magus. The fact is that I would also love to have you as an ally of us Unifilers."

"Who'd, do that."

Elsa looked away in a huff.

But Purcell continued while smiling as if he was making sport of Elsa.

"Consider it veeery carefully. At the very least we've achieved one goal. And were you to refuse to cooperate on the second and third then, well, we have our methods."

He wasn't any less polite, but this time there was ice in his words. Elsa reflexively looked Purcell in the eyes.

"The only thing needed for you to satisfy the requirements of that first one is to stay alive. As for the second, you need only to be able to speak."

Understanding the meaning of his words, Elsa's face went pale with horror.

"You understand, right? Tearing off fingernails is the gentlest way. Breaking off fingers. Shaving off the nose. Cutting off the ears. Amputating the limbs. There's other ways to torture a woman, eh, but I do not wish to do something like that to a lady."

That was absolutely a lie. The man called Purcell in front of her said that with such joy. Elsa felt that instinctively.

"E, even, so, m, my, reply, does, not, change."

Elsa tried her best to act brave, but her body shivered slightly.

"Oh my, so you must like being tortured, eh?"

"N, no. I don't, like, either, option."

Hearing that, Purcell burst into laughter.

"Oh my, oh my, aren't we a selfish lady, eh? Alright, you'll have just this one day to think it over. Tomorrow morning, I'll hear your reply once more. Until then, please consider

it very, very carefully."

"N, no, matter, how long, I, think, my, answer, won't, change."

Elsa firmly stared at Parcell while she retorted with a trembling voice and,

"Ah, m'lady's eyes are pretty, eh. Like the finest of Aquamarines. I wonder just what kind of voice you'll be making once I gouge them out, how about you, eh?"

Purcell said and licked his lips.

"!..."

Elsa quietly fainted.

"What, that's boring. You just fainted. ...Return her to her cell."



When Elsa once more came to, she was in her cell. The iron bars were shut and locked. There was no window so she couldn't tell the time.

But no matter how much time she had, Elsa's heart was settled. She had betrayed the people kind to her by running away, but she would not betray them a second time.

No matter what she went through she would not budge.

Suddenly, she remembered what Reinhardt had said when he gave her the dagger Jin had made.

'As a noblewoman, that blade is the final tool to protect your dignity with. Only when you absolutely no matter what do not want to your will to be trampled is it acceptable to draw.'

What she couldn't understand at that time she now vaguely could. To sever her own life with her own hands. The dagger was for that purpose.

But she had left that dagger behind. No, she had abandoned it along with her status of a noble.

"Even, so, I've, already."

Elsa made a vow in her heart. To never sell out Reinhardt and Jin. To that end, she would subject herself to anything.

“That’s, my, pride.”

She closed her eyes and sights of the journey until now came to mind.

“It was, fun.”

The trip with Reinhardt. Departing for the golem boat race. Being together with Jin on the return trip. She learned a lot of things. Met a lot of people.

Thinking about that, even at this time she felt her heart grow warm.

“I’m, content.”

Muttering that, Elsa laid herself down. There was still time until nightfall, but perhaps because of her piled up fatigue, her body was sluggish and while she lay there her awareness sunk into the darkness.

CHAPTER 13

JIN'S WRATH

“Guard three, neutralized.”

“Front gate sentry two, neutralized.”

In the blink of an eye, the three guards watching the stronghold's surroundings and the two guarding the entrance were neutralized. The means was through [Stun Rod] which was similar to [Stun].

Applied directly on skin it could produce 50,000 volts, and if used on someone with a thick leather coat it could produce up to 500,000 volts.

The golems of the SP, alias ninja unit, did not have staves but instead were capable of stunning the enemy by shooting electricity through their own hands.

“Back gate sentry two, neutralized.”

In front of them who were hidden using [Stealth] on top of being multiple times stronger and faster than humans the personnel of the stronghold were neutralized one by one.

“The number of people inside is 32. Currently 12 have been neutralized.”

Using their internal ManaComs, one after another they sent reports to Reiko.

“Conjectured structure of three basement floors and three aboveground floors. The material is granite. The building is relatively new.”

They also send detailed reports of the building's aspects. Simultaneously they were also transmitted to Laozi on Hourai Island, while Reiko did her own personal analysis of the situation.

“There is a reaction on the second basement floor that appears to correspond to Elsa.”

“Their leader is thought to be on the second floor upstairs in the stronghold.”

“Currently 19 people have been neutralized. There is a possibility that they will soon notice.”

“Alright, give maximum priority to safeguarding Elsa.”

“Roger”



“What’s wrong? What happened!”

“I don’t know! The sentries have disappeared! The people who went to get in contact with the guards didn’t come back!”

“Is it an enemy raid?”

“Entirely unknown, sir!”

“Alright, go on alert status one!”



“...?”

Elsa woke up to a ruckus.

“Is something going on?”

At that time, two black-masked people came down the stairs.

“She’s there.”

“Ah, there’s nothing abnormal here.”

They exchanged lines after seeing that Elsa was inside her cell. The one of them, and immediately after the other fell down.

“?”

In front of Elsa who didn’t know what’s what, two golems appeared.

They were both female-types, approximately the same height as Elsa. One of them

spoke.

“Elsa-san, no doubt?”

“Ah, yes.”

After hearing that, the other golem appeared to make a report to someone who was not here.

“Elsa-san discovered, she does not appear to have great wounds. She has been jailed, now beginning rescue operation.”

That female-type golem then laid her hands on the cell’s bars, or so Elsa thought, but then the golem completely bent the heavy iron bars.

“A, mazing.”

The gap in the bars was plenty large enough for a person to go through, then the golem stepped inside and,

“Excuse me.”

She said and twisted off the restraints on Elsa’s arms and legs. However,

“It’s very unlikely anyone but the chief can remove that choker, please endure it for a bit longer.”

“Eh? Chi, ef?”

“Yes. The person who made us.”

“Could, that, person, be.”

“Our Father, Nidou Jin.”

“Jin, kun...”

Tears escaped from Elsa’s eyes. She knew the truth that Jin had not forsaken her.

“Elsa-san, can you walk?”

“I, can.”

“In that case please put this on.”

The golem took a ring out of an accessory pack on her hip and handed it over to Elsa. It was something Elsa was very well-acquainted with.

“This, is.”

The ring Jin had first given her, the Ring of Protection. The ring that had saved Elsa multiple times. While still crying, Elsa put on the ring.

“Come, let’s go.”

The golems took the lead and began to walk, and Elsa said to them,

“Wa, it, what, are, your, names?”

If they’re Jin’s golems they surely have name, Elsa thought and asked.

“I am Canna. She is Dahlia.”

“Can, na, Dah, lia. Thank, you.”

Elsa briefly said to them and began following Canna and Dahlia.

They climbed up the stairs. When they arrived at the second floor, Dahlia who was going ahead disappeared.

“Agh.”

A short, mumbled scream was heard.

In the middle of the hallway on her left-hand size was Dahlia whom Elsa had thought disappeared, and at her feet were two collapsed black-masked people.

“You, killed, them?”

“No, only stunned them. Since Chief dislikes murderers.”

They once more climbed up stairs, and there in a wide lobby there were four collapsed black-masked people. In addition, two male-type golems were standing there.

“Them, too?”

Elsa asked when she saw the male-type golems.

“Yes. They’re Elm and Ash.”

The two golems in question approached them and,

“Elsa-san, right? We will be seeing you off.”

And thus, Elsa escaped from the stronghold that was one of the subdivisions of the Unifilers, protected by Kanna, Dahlia, Elm and Ash.



“Elsa! Are you okay!”

After walking a hundred meters from the stronghold Elsa and Jin reunited.

“Jin, kun...”

Elsa broke in to a run, buried her face in Jin’s chest and began crying in a loud voice.

“Jin, kun, I was, scared...”

“Elsa...”



Jin stroked Elsa's back for a while, and when at last Elsa had cried herself out he gently placed his hand on her shoulder and separated their bodies. He then took a handkerchief out of his pocket and softly wiped Elsa's face.

"Tha, nk, you."

Jin got suspicious of Elsa's voice which was even more faltering than usual, and discovered the necklace biting into her neck.

"What's this?"

"Col, lar, to, se, al, ma, gic."

The anger on Jin's face after hearing that was apparent. Elsa had the excess Magic Energy disorder. If Elsa's magic was sealed then what would happen? The surplus Magic Energy could destroy Elsa's body.

"Those bastards put on something like this on you."

Jin left the task to his wrath and tore off the choker.

"Eh?"

Elsa was confused by the choker that she couldn't remove no matter how hard she tried coming off so easily, but then she thought that well, it's Jin, and she could understand.

Then Jin examined the detached choker with [Trace] and [Inspection] magics, however

"It doesn't just seal magic...! They fucking wrote a magic formula on it that's like the reverse of healing magic, gradually weakening the body."

Jin said with a voice full of fury, crushed the choker with his hands, and moreover gave instructions to Reiko.

"Reiko, crush that stronghold."

CHAPTER 14

ULTIMATUM

The furious Jin sent orders to the Ninja Unit through Reiko.

“Throw the neutralized people outside.”

“Once there’s no one inside contact me.”

“Goodbye.”

Even Elm and Ash who had escorted Elsa once more headed towards the stronghold.

Left behind were Jin, Elsa, Reiko, Dahlia, and Canna.

“Jin-kun, what were those golems?”

Elsa wanted to know and she asked.

“They’re the SP, nickname Ninja Unit.”

“Ninja Unit?”

Apparently she did not know what ninjas were.

“Yeah. Basically, they’re golems that protect me usually without showing themselves.”

For now, he explained it like that.

“When did you make them?”

“Eh? Hmm, after we left Egelia Kingdom’s royal castle, I think.”

“Eh? Where? I didn’t see you build them anywhere.”

For a moment Jin hesitated about what to say, but then made up his mind.

“On Hourai Island.”

“Hourai Island? Not Kunlun Island?”

“Yeah. Once all this has been finished I’ll explain it to you properly, so please hold on for a bit longer.”

Jin appeased Elsa’s questions.

“Father, report from Ash. Excluding their leader, everyone has been successfully neutralized. Currently they’re being carried out.”

“Alright, got a good feeling about this.”

Then Jin looked at Elsa and,

“I’ll now be going to teach a lesson to the guy who hurt you, Elsa. Please wait here. Dahlia and Canna will protect you.”

He said and began to walk. Elsa gripped the sleeve of his coat.

“Wait. Take me with you.”

“Are you sure you’ll be okay?”

She would return into the place she had only just escaped from, so Jin was worried about her.

“If it’s with Jin-kun I’ll be alright. ...More importantly, don’t leave me alone.”

She had frightened eyes like a small puppy. Jin sensed Elsa’s uneasiness and nodded.

“Alright, let’s go together.”

Jin said and held out his hand which Elsa then took and stood up.

“Reiko, Dahlia, Canna, let’s go.”

“Yes.”

Jin began walking accompanied by three golems.

“[Light Ball].”

He created a ball of light which floated midair. The Light Ball would light the way until

the Magic Energy it was charged with depleted. He created ten of them and had them float around the stronghold. The area was then as bright as day.

“Barrier.”

Furthermore he deployed a Magic Barrier that enveloped Elsa and himself. They walked on without pausing and set foot inside the stronghold.

“Don’t worry. No matter what happens I’ll protect you, Elsa.”

“...Mm.”

They walked inside the unmanned stronghold, heading towards the second floor. There lie the living room cum office of Purcell who called himself the head of the eighth subdivision of the Unifilers, Purcell.

While walking, Jin heard the general details from Elsa.

“Open the door”

Jin said, and Canna who was following him went ahead and kicked in the door. The ornamental door looked heavy, yet it was blown away like leaves in the wind.

“W-who is it?”

A panicked voice. If you looked, you could see a slim man dressed in white robes in the corner of the room. He was protected by two pitch-black golems on both sides, while he himself could be seen holding an excessively ornamented long cane.

“...Purcell.”

Jin didn’t miss the fear that ran through Elsa’s eyes when she saw the man.

“So you’re the branch head?”

“T-that’s right. The branch head of the eighth subdivision of the Unifilers, Purcell Marces D’Canagerion! Y-you are?”

Jin grinned broadly and said,

“I’m that Nidou Jin you’re so interested in.”

Hearing that, Purcell’s face was filled with mixed feelings.

"I-I see! I see that taking Miss Randol hostage was effective indeed, eh? Co-come now, pledge allegiance to us Unifilers!"

Purcell said with a pompous attitude. However,

"Don't screw around."

Jin said with a voice so cold that Elsa next to him couldn't believe her ears.

"I didn't particularly care whatever you called yourselves, or whatever you planned, as long as you didn't drag me into it."

After Jin's remark Elsa couldn't stop herself from looking Jin in the face.

"But, this time is unacceptable. You kidnapped Elsa. You made her cry. You hurt Elsa's nanny. You are...My enemies."

Elsa had never seen Jin with a face this grim. But she didn't think it scary in the slightest. Rather, it made Elsa feel relieved. As long as she was protected by this person, she wouldn't have to fear anything. That's how she thought.

"I'll spare only your lives. Go back and tell that to your comrades. If you make any more moves on my friends, that day will be the day Unifilers get destroyed."

"Y-you must be joking, eh? You think you can take on us Unifilers by yourself?"

Even this late in the game, Purcell acted tough.

In contrast to Purcell, Jin put her hand on Elsa's shoulder and,

"By myself? I'm not by myself, am I? I've got companions I can trust, and friends I must protect."

He said, then looked at Reiko, Dahlia, Canna, and said,

"I've also got children I can rely on."

At those words Dahlia and Canna took a step forward. Purcell looked at the two golems that had approximately the same build as Elsa and,

"Y-you were a Magi Craftsman, right eh? You think those dainty golems can bring down my imperial guards?"

He said, and then to the pitch-black golems on his sides,

“Repel them!”

Purcell gave the order. Jin merely said,

“It’s okay to use your full power.”

The two golems understood that alone, and in an instant grabbed the pitch-black golems from behind, and poured on an electric shock of 10,000,000 volts.

It wasn’t the stun mode that wouldn’t give humans permanent damage, but mighty lightning-type magic. Under that might the golems’ exteriors partially melted, and through the created hole jumped in and easily pierced the golems’ Control Cores, destroying them.

The characteristic smell of ozone wafted in the room, the pitch-black golems collapsed at nearly the same time, and as their metal bodies hit the stone floor there was a high-pitched sound.

“E-eeek!”

Seeing that, Purcell wasn’t able to stand up due to his fear. But Jin gave him the final blow.

“If that’s what happens to golems, what would happen to a person? Dahlia.”

“Yes, let’s try it out.”

“Eeek! Eeeeaaaaah!”

Dahlia simply came closer to him and Purcell fainted. Foam came out of his mouth and the pants he was wearing got wet. Apparently he peed his pants.

Seeing that, Jin sighed and turned to look at Elsa next to him.

“How about that? Do you feel a bit better?”

He said. Elsa smiled just a bit and nodded,

“Mm. Thanks.”

She replied.

Jin looked at Purcell who had wet his pants and looked like he had no other choice as he gave orders.

"Ah, that's disgusting. Dahlia, drag him along as we go out, but take care that you don't touch his wet clothes."

"Yes, Chief."

Then Dahlia grabbed Purcell by the collar and dragged him out of the stronghold. Jin and Elsa went ahead of her. Because they didn't want to walk through a hallway dripping with urine.

Outside the fortress the Light Balls Jin had lit were still floating.

Some of the black-masked men who were gathered in a bundle were groaning. It appeared that they would wake up soon.

Jin took out a Magi Crystal from his pocket and got closer to the unconscious Purcell. Then,

"[Transfer Info Level 6]."

He copied the information relating to the Unifilers. By analyzing this he would surely get to know all sorts of things about the Unifilers.

"Hey, wake up. I said wake up."

"U...uuuhh..."

Jin called out multiple times to Purcell who had been thrown down at his feet, and finally he appeared to have woken up.

Because he had crashed into things all around while being dragged, his robe was worn out and his cloak too was torn out in places.

"So you're finally awake."

"Eek!"

Realizing that Jin was looking down him, Purcell drew back from fear.

"Good grief, so they mean people like you when they speak of an ass in the lion's skin."

While saying so, Jin looked Reiko who was waiting nearby in the face. Just that was enough for Reiko to understand and,

"Father, the units from Sky-71 to Sky-75 are in the skies, ready for your command."

She replied.

Jin turned to face Purcell and the black-masked men who had woken up and,

"Listen, withdraw from your foolish ambition of something like unifying the continent. This is a warning. There won't be a second one."

He told them. The men listened to him silently.

Next Jin gave a short indication.

"Reiko."

After receiving that, Reiko gave instructions through her ManaCom to the high-altitude Air Force.

Immediately afterwards, pillars of light poured down. There were ten of them. It goes without saying that they were [Laser] lights.

Every plane beamed at maximum power from both of their installed cannons. The energy stimulated the Ether in the atmosphere, giving the technically invisible light rays visible traces.

Exposed to ten laser beams, in an instant the granite composing the stronghold evaporated. Because the light came from flying vehicles, moving the beams' target point took less than a second.

As a result, in an instant a little over 70 percent of the stronghold had evaporated into nothingness.

"Wha-whawha-wh..."

Starting with Purcell, the conscious black-masked men became frozen with fear en masse.

"Listen, this is final. 'Do. Not. Get. Involved. With. Us.'"

“Y-yeeeess!”

This time everyone replied together.

Jin gave their miserable state one look and,

“Elsa, will this do? I could also kill them all but... That’s a little much, no?”

He asked of Elsa who was by him watching.

Elsa suddenly nodded.

“Mm. This, will do.”

Seeing that, Jin said,

“Alright, well, let’s go.”

He then gave a pat on Elsa’s shoulder and they began walking slowly. The moon was shining in the middle of the sky.

CHAPTER 15

AFTERWARDS

By the time Jin and Elsa reached the edge of River Torres, dawn was finally breaking.

“Ah, I’m tired.”

Jin said and sat on top of a rock that was up on the riverbank. Elsa also sat down.

“You must be tired too?”

Jin said and Elsa nodded to confirm.

“Mm. A little.”

Judging from her expression in this poor light, she wasn’t just tired but also was hiding some more complex emotion.

“Is something on your mind?”

Jin asked, and Elsa spoke a few words with a sad look on her face.

“I wish Mine was here.”

Hearing that, Jin asked Elsa.

“Are you worried even though after running away with you she exposed you to danger?”

“Yes, because it was my wish to run away. I also think I was to blame too for getting into danger. More importantly, Mine protected me and...She may have died.”

Elsa said and cast her eyes down. Tears began to gather in those eyes. Jin comforted Elsa,

“Mine’s safe.”

He said.

“Eh?”

"I found Mine who had drifted along the stream, then I began looking for you, Elsa. She had serious wounds, but she's fine now. She's in the care of a reliable healing clinic. After she improves a bit more I can have you two meet."

Jin briefly explained Mine's circumstances, and this time tears of joy spilled from Elsa's eyes.

"Mine, lived..."

Looking at Elsa who happily muttered a few words, Jin was glad that she could be saved.

After resting for a while, Jin and Elsa once more began to walk. It was already considerably bright. River mist enveloped the surroundings.

They moved for quite a time, until they arrived at a wide and flat location.

It was around six meters wide, vast enough to park two carriages in side-by-side.

"Maybe they can land here."

Jin surveyed the area and muttered. Reiko caught that and,

"It is fine."

She said and looked up at the skies.

"Alright."

Jin said a brief word, and Reiko gave orders through her ManaCom.

"Pelican-1, come here."

"Eh? Not just the Raptors, you also called in the Pelicans?"

To the surprised Jin Reiko said,

"Yes, Laozi said to prepare them for the unlikely event that they are needed."

Jin nodded and,

"I see, as expected of him. In that case, Elsa. Go over there by the edge for a bit. ...Like that."

"?"

While Elsa didn't know what was going on, she still moved to the edge of the riverbank as Jin said. There a black shadow swooped down from the skies.

"!"

Elsa was surprised and put herself on guard. Jin told her,

"It's fine. That's an airplane I built."

Elsa looked at Jin seemingly astonished.

"An airplane?"

Before Jin could say something in reply to that, Pelican-1 cleaved apart the mist and landed down on the riverbank where there was barely enough space. Afterwards the landing gears protruded a little bit out from the riverbank.

"This is...an airplane?"

"Yeah, it's transportation model Pelican-1. Come on, get in."

Jin said, went ahead up the airstair, then turned around to face Elsa and held out his hand to her.

Seeing an airplane for the first time, Elsa timidly took Jin's hand and ascended the airstair.

"Ah..."

From Elsa's viewpoint, the plane's inside wasn't much different from Jin's carriage's. And that's how she was able to calm down a little.

"Come on, have a seat, and please buckle your belt."

Jin had Elsa sit on the window seat, and buckled her seatbelt.

"What's, this?"

"It's a safety belt so that you won't get thrown off your seat in case the fuselage shakes."

Jin said and sat down on the seat in front of Elsa, then secured his belt.

"All good, please take off."

"Roger."

The pilot, Sky-1, was the top Air Force golem.

With a whooooshing sound as if the plane was sucking in air, Pelican-1 started moving.

"Ah, um, wha—"

Elsa was bewildered by Pelican-1 suddenly starting and the G-forces of the takeoff.

"It's fine."

Jin faced Elsa and said a few words to her. Elsa was calmed down by Jin's words, enough to make her able to calmly look out of the window.

"A-amazing."

After a short run, Pelican-1 gently took off. At that moment they felt as if they were floating.

Then Pelican-1 raised its nose and steadily climbed in altitude. Tearing the river mist to pieces, in a moment it had flown out into the clear sky.

"We're flying..."

Elsa's body was shivering a little. She was flying for the first time in her life, moreover she had boarded the vehicle without thinking.

"I told you, just relax. I'm with you."

Jin loosened his seatbelt and stroked Elsa's hair. Elsa made an embarrassed face, but her shivering seemed to lessen.

Pelican-1 rose up to an altitude of about 3000 meters, and headed east. Under them were white clouds. Mountains and rivers, forests and lakes, cities and villages all appeared tiny.

Once Elsa was used to the sensation of flying, she couldn't get her eyes off the spectacle.

"Amazing. This is what the world looks like from the sky."

Pushing against the window frame, she looked at the world. Pelican-1 going at over 300 kilometers per hour was above the sea in two hours.

"T-that, could it be Elias Peninsula? If that's the case, is that Io island?"

Looking at the unusually high-spirited Elsa, even Jin's heart was warmed. Even if for a moment, he had made her forget about the shock of being kidnapped. That's what he was thinking about.

Then at the end of the sea spanning as far as the eye can see, a large island came into sight.

"That's Hourai Island."

Jin explained.

"It's the place where my real home is, and it's my base."

"Hourai Island...Jin-kun's, home."

Elsa stared at it with intense concentration.

Pelican-1 began to gradually descend.

"Elsa, the time of the landing will be a little shaky, so please sit down properly."

"Okay."

Elsa obediently did as Jin told her to.

Then Pelican-1 landed on the runway in front of the research laboratory.

"Welcome, to Hourai Island."

Jin who went down first, turned towards Elsa who was coming down the airstair and held out his hand while speaking.

“Much, obliged.”

Elsa replied and she blushed a little.

“Welcome back, My Lord. Welcome, Elsa-sama.”

Laozi’s terminal came to greet them. The perfect butler.

“Who?”

Elsa asked Jin. Before Jin could reply Laozi introduced himself.

“Excuse me my manners. I am Laozi, and I’ve been entrusted with managing this island, pleased to make your acquaintance.”

He said and bowed neatly. Even Jin who was the source of Laozi’s information couldn’t bow so splendidly.

“You must be tired, please first take a bath and then have a meal.”

Just like Laozi suggested they went to take a bath. Jin didn’t even know there was a thing like this, but the bathrooms’ gender-segregation was already completed. As expected of Laozi, he thought.

Jin was attended by Reiko, and Elsa by Soleil and Luna.



“Sigh.”

Jin who had been moving around all night since yesterday stretched while submerged in the warm hot spring water.

“Reiko, good work.”

He spoke words of gratitude to Reiko who was bathing together with him.

“No, this time I didn’t do much of anything.”

“That’s not true at all. I had Reiko as a mediator and as my support. If you weren’t there, there surely would’ve been more difficulties throughout the whole deal.”

“Yes, thank you very much.”

“Elsa seems to have had a hard time, so please look after her kindly.”

“...Yes, I will endeavour to do so.”



“...”

“Elsa-sama, how is the water temperature?”

“Ah, it’s fine. Just perfect.”

“Elsa-sama, I shall wash your back.”

“Mm. Thanks.”

Elsa received a warm welcome from Soleil and Luna.

Despite the designs of the Unifilers, and despite the nobles greedy for getting ahead in life, the skies of Hourai Island were blue and clear.

CHAPTER 16

BEING CALLED A BROTHER

After bathing, the two had a meal at a time that wasn't quite breakfast nor was it quite lunch.

"This time I've done the cooking."

Laozi said. He appeared to be in high-spirits about making food for Jin for the first time, so the portions were on the larger side but because of their hunger the two ate it all without problems.

"Thanks."

Jin's stomach swelled out and his eyelids began to droop.

"Father, please have a brief rest."

Reiko worried about Jin's health.

"Ah, right. I suppose I'll take a short nap. Elsa must be sleepy too."

"Mm."

Then, he guided Elsa to the mansion. Due to it being spring, despite Hourai Island being north of the Northern Tropic it was rather warm by midday.

"Make yourself at home."

"What's, this. I've never seen a building like this before."

Elsa was wide-eyed in wonder at the Japanese-style tiled roof architecture.

"Well, let's just have a short rest. After that I'll explain everything."

"Mm, I'm looking forward to it."

He laid out a futon in a room facing south and called Elsa there.

"This also has tatami mats. I'm glad."

Elsa said and threw herself on the with a whump. After that she rolled around all over the place and towards the futon. Almost like a child.

“So, I’ll be going to my own room to sleep for a bit.”

Jin said and was about to close the sliding screen when,

“...Wait. ...Please, just stay by me for a little while.”

He was held back by Elsa’s heartrending voice.

“Got it.”

Jin once more went back to Elsa’s room and lay down on the tatami.

“I’ll be here, so you can rest easy.”

“Mm. Thanks, Jin-kun.”

This time Elsa closed her eyes looking calm from the bottom of her heart.

“...Lonesome, isn’t she.”

Jin reminisced of the past.

During his orphanage days, there was a time when they had taken custody of a girl who had lost her parents. She was a student on the third year of elementary school and could never sleep unless she had someone next to her.

Starting with Jin, the older children had slept by her in turns. Jin was nostalgic as he thought about those days.

“Father, it’s about time for you to wake up, please.”

And just like that, before he knew it Jin had also fallen asleep. He was woken up by Reiko’s voice.

“Yawn, I slept well.”

Jin got up and stretched. Reiko looked to be in a bit of a bad mood.

“Father, if you don’t sleep properly in a futon you won’t get any less tired. Besides, what if you caught a cold?”

“Ah, sorry. But I was worried about Elsa.”

He apologized, and Reiko looked reluctantly accepting.

“It’s soon 3 o’clock. If you don’t contact Reinhardt-san he’ll get worried.”

“Ah, you’re right. I had already been considering telling Reinhardt about this place sooner or later, but...”

Jin said to Reiko who nodded and,

“I will follow whatever Father thinks is the best.”

She said.

Jin quietly left the room, and tried asking the same thing about Laozi through his terminal in the mansion.

“Yes, if My Lord thinks it is a good idea then please carry on to do so. I shall support you with my full capabilities.”

Laozi also said something similar, and Jin finally decided to bring Reinhardt along with him here.

Then, the pitter-patter sound of running steps were heard from the hallway. Jin wondered what was going on and went to take a look, and there was Elsa, running.

“Elsa?”

He said to Elsa’s back as she had passed him by, and suddenly she stopped and slowly turned around.

“Jin, kun?”

“Elsa, wh-what’s wrong?”

In Elsa’s eyes enough tears had gathered that it looked like they would fall any moment now.

“Jin-kun!”

Then Elsa came jumping towards Jin.

“I thought you’d left me behind.”

She said and clung to Jin. Jin felt as if Elsa had regressed back to a child a little.

(It’s probably because of the anxiety from the time she was kidnapped, or because of the change in environment.)

Jin thought while gently stroking Elsa’s back.

“Well, what to do now.”

If his guess was right, it should solve itself with enough time. But right now Jin couldn’t just quietly go out.

“I wonder if she’ll be fine if she’s got Soleil and Luna with her?”

She had been fine during the bath, so Jin summoned the two and decided to leave Elsa with them for a while.

“Yes, leave it to us.”

Then Jin told Elsa.

“I just thought that I’d only go get Reinhardt. So could you wait for that?”

Then Elsa nodded with a sad look on her face and,

“Mm. But, come back soon. ...Jin-nii.”

She said.

“Jin-nii?”

She called him ‘nii’, the same as Reinhardt.

“Mm. ...I already abandoned the Randol house. So I’m all alone. If possible, I want Jin-nii to treat me as a sister. ...Please?”

Ah, Jin understood. Elsa had already become someone without a single relative. And that’s why she couldn’t help but be anxious.

“Got it. From now on, I’ll consider Elsa my younger sister. Is that okay?”

“Mm. Jin-nii.”

“Alright. In that case, I’ll go get Reinhardt, so just wait patiently.”

Leaving behind the finally calmed-down Elsa, Jin warped back to the carriage in Tellurs.

There he realized. There was a time difference between Tellurs and Hourai Island. It seemed to be a difference of about three hours and a half. Therefore it was still before noon.

“I suppose I’ll first go check how Mine’s health is.”

Without going into the hotel, he headed towards Sally’s healing clinic.

At Hourai Island the skies were clear but here it was cloudy. Jin walked downtown while feeling the vaguely moist spring winds.

The clinic was at the end of a curved alley near the riverbank.

“Good day.”

He opened the door and stepped inside where there were three patients.

“Oh, it’s you. Wait a moment, please.”

Sally looked at Jin and said, then once again began examining the patients. After waiting for about 15 minutes, Sally who had finished viewing her patients said,

“The woman –Mine, was it?– has recovered consciousness.”

“Really now! That’s good.”

“However, even though she hasn’t recovered her strength yet she’s already tried to leave the hospital and I’m at a loss with her. You warn her too, please.”

Then Jin entered the sickbay with Sally. The resting Mine saw Jin’s face, sat up and,

“Jin-sama! Elsa, Elsa is!”

She yelled agitatedly and so Jin waved at her to sit down and,

"Mine, it's okay. Elsa's already out of trouble. She's not hurt anywhere and she's safe, so you can relax."

He told her so and all strength seemed to leave Mine's body.

"Oh, uh...Is that so...You saved her, right? Thank you very much, Jin-sama."

She said and once more lay down on the bed.

"Mine, you're Elsa's real mother, right? Right now, Elsa's hidden in a place where she absolutely won't be found. I don't have any intention of telling about it to anyone of the Randol house other than Reinhardt. So you can rest easy and recover."

Jin said, tears welled up in Mine's eyes and,

"So you knew...I...nearly brought her great misfortune."

She said.

"It's fine as long as you acknowledge that. Think well upon what you'll do from now on. To begin with you need to get healthy. But I'm glad. Now Elsa can also rest easy."

Jin said, then,

"Jin-sama, I have a request. If possible, please don't tell Elsa that I am alive."

"Eh?"

"After going through this I've finally realized it. I only bring misfortune to that child. It's better if she doesn't have someone like me."

Maybe being close to death changed her worldview, as Mine was almost like a completely different person. However,

"You idiot. By now, Elsa has lost all her relatives. Mine, aren't you her only blood relative? And her real mother at that? If you don't protect her then who will?"

He said to cheer up Mine. Still however,

"Is that...right? Can someone like me be a good mother?"

Mine kept saying things like that. Her troublesome nature hasn't changed, Jin thought with a strained laugh in his heart.

CHAPTER 17

SHOCKING CONFESSION

Putting aside the matter with Mine for a moment, Jin returned back to the hotel they were staying in to meet with Reinhardt.

“Jin!”

He arrived at Reinhardt’s room and before the butler Claude could say anything Reinhardt himself butted in.

“What in the world happened? Why haven’t I heard anything from you until now? Is it something you can’t tell about even to me?”

He gripped Jin’s shoulder and talked on and on. Jin quickly said,

“Calm down. I plan to explain everything soon. Just calm down for now, and let’s go to my carriage.”

As a result, as you’d expect from Reinhardt,

“Hm, you don’t want people to overhear? Got it, let’s go! ...Claude, I’ll be going out for a bit. Don’t be worried even if I’m late in coming back!”

He loudly told Claude and,

“Come on, Jin, let’s go!”

He said and gave a pat on Jin’s shoulder.

Jin returned to his own room and called out to Ann.

“Yes, master?”

“You come along too.”

And so, Jin entered the carriage together with Reinhardt and Ann.

“Now Jin, please explain!”

Reinhardt urged and,

"Well, just wait. Reinhardt, to tell you the truth, in this carriage there's a secret that I haven't told you about. If you do this here..."

Jin said and opened the door behind the back seats that was pretending to be for storing luggage.

"A Warp Gate is installed here."

Reinhardt was amazed by the statement.

"What's that you say! So that means, so that means... You can go to Kunlun Island from here!?"

"Well, you'll know where it goes after we go through it. How about it, are you coming?"

Jin asked and,

"Of course I'll come too! How exciting!"

Reinhardt said, seemingly ready to crawl in there any time now. Jin smiled and said,

"In that case, I'll go in first and after that you come through holding Ann's hand."

This Warp Gate too let people through only if it recognized Jin's Magic Energy Pattern.

Once Reinhardt had confirmed that Jin had warped, he took Ann's hand and plunged into the Warp Gate.



Reinhardt came out of a different Warp Gate into a wide room.

At a glance there were no less than 50 Warp Gates side-by-side. Each one looked operational.

"Ji-Jin, where is this? It looks different from the cellar from earlier?"

Reinhardt asked after seeing the room that was not at all similar to the room of the Warp Gate in Kunlun Island.

"Oh, right. Reinhardt, welcome to Hourai Island."

“Hourai Island you say?”

“Yeah. Well, I’ll explain it all in detail. But first come over here, please.”

For now, Jin took the somewhat excited Reinhardt out of the research laboratory where the Warp Gates were. Outside it was already evening.

“Eh? Wasn’t it just past noon when we were in Tellurs?”

“Yeah, there’s a time difference of about three and a half hours between here and Tellurs.”

“?”

Reinhardt didn’t seem to understand yet. But as Jin would explain it all soon, he showed Reinhardt in the mansion.

“Oh, please take off your shoes.”

He said, and Reinhardt who had already become familiar with this at Kunlun Island complied, nodding and taking off his shoes before entering the mansion.

“There’s someone I’d like you to meet, Reinhardt.”

Jin said and Reinhardt tilted his head in confusion,

“Someone you’d like me to meet? ...Jin, could it be?”

Without letting Reinhardt finish what he was saying, he opened the sliding screen to Elsa’s room.

“Elsa, I brought Reinhardt.”



“Elsa! You’re okay! You idiot, I was so worried!”

“Rai-nii, sorry. I was foolish.”

The cousins joined hands rejoicing their reunion.

Once the two had calmed down, Jin ordered dinner from Soleil and Luna. The preparations had been entrusted to Laozi and the golem maids and so the two only had to carry the food.

“Come, let’s celebrate our reunion.”

Jin said and raised a glass of wine. Having wine on a low table in a tatami-matted room while sitting on a cushion was the only choice as there wasn’t any good sake.

“Cheers.”

And so the three started eating dinner. While eating, Reinhardt was itching for answers and Elsa also needed them, and then after thinking about it Jin decided on explaining.

First,

“Reinhardt, putting aside your country there’s something I want to tell you as just a friend.”

Jin prefaced. Reinhardt deeply nodded.

Then Jin finally confessed.

“I wasn’t originally born in this world.”

“What do you mean?”

He wasn’t understood in one go, Jin thought.

“Basically, I was born in a different world, then I was... Well, transferred into this world.”

“...”

The two pondered and gauged the significance of that for quite a while, but before long Reinhardt spoke.

“I see, so your outrageous knowledge is from that world.”

“Yeah. In the world I was originally from there was no magic. In exchange the advance of science supported people’s lives.”

“But then how did you get in this world?”

It was the obvious question.

“In the other world, I was about to die and just in the nick of time Reiko summoned me. Well, at that time she wasn’t the current Reiko though.”

“Summoned!?”

“About to, die?”

The parts they were surprised about were different, but the matter was sensational indeed.

“Su-summoned... And from a parallel world at that? Sigh, I’d laugh down that story if it wasn’t from you, Jin.”

“It’s unbelievable that Jin-nii was about to die.”

Jin smiled bitterly and kept on speaking.

“Well, I suppose. Reiko...The Automata that was Reiko’s basis apparently spent 1000 years looking before it found me.”

“1000 years!? W-wait a moment. A thousand years?”

After hearing of the time span of 1000 years Reinhardt seemed to no longer be in control of himself.

“Yeah. The name of the person who made that Automata was Adrianna Balbora Ceci. My predecessor.”

“Eeeeh?”

Reinhardt’s amazement reached its peak.

“So, that means, Jin-nii, you met Adrianna Balbora Ceci?”

Jin shook his head in reply to Elsa.

“No, I remember only what was recorded of her. After being summoned, because of the predecessor’s magic I inherited the magic knowledge she had left behind.”

“.....”

For a moment there was only silence.

This time the first one to speak was Elsa.

“I understand the reason why Jin-nii isn’t normal. Are we the first ones you’ve told?”

Jin nodded.

“Yeah, something like this isn’t really a topic to go around telling the public about. I’ll say no thanks to getting weird people to have their eyes on me.”

He said, but,

“...That’s impossible.”

Elsa blurted out.

“By now the Unifilers are eyeing you. Even in Elias Kingdom and Egelia Kingdom Jin-nii stood out.”

“Right.”

Jin too was aware of that.

“If I had just secluded myself on this island that wouldn’t have happened, but honestly being alone is a little, you know.”

That’s to say, having only golems around you gets lonely.

After Jin said that, Elsa visibly relaxed and nodded,

“I’m glad. Even Jin-nii’s got a proper disposition.”

She said something of the like. As usual, she was apparently worried that Jin might be into puppets.

“By the way Elsa, what’s up with the ‘Jin-nii’?”

Reinhardt who had kept quiet for a while spoke up.

"I've already abandoned the Randol house. And as such I asked Jin-nii to consider me a sister. That's why he's Jin-nii."

Hearing that, Reinhardt folded his arms.

"Hmm, so that's why. He did think of her that way..."

Reinhardt grumbled and looked to be pondering a little.

Then once more he looked Elsa straight in the eyes and,

"So you really have no intention of going back any more?"

He asked her with a serious look on his face.

CHAPTER 18

FROM NOW ON

To Reinhardt who asked Elsa if she had no intention of going back or not,

“No. Sorry.”

She said with an apology. Reinhardt made a truly, truly lonely face but,

“Well, if that’s the decision you’ve come to after thinking about it, it’s fine. Or rather, it’s not for me to judge whether it’s good or bad.”

He said and turned to Jin,

“Jin, please take care of this inconsiderate cousin of mine.”

Reinhardt said and bowed.

Jin had also thought that for the next while he’d probably have to take care of her and so he nodded.

“I’m not much good at anything but.”

Even Elsa remarked something like that. It didn’t appear likely that Jin would say he knew, however ‘taking care of her’ seemed to have turned out to have a different meaning altogether.

“...However, you really weren’t born in this world, huh, Jin.”

Once while bathing in Kunlun Island’s hot springs Reinhardt had unintentionally spoken of that.

“Hmm, well, yeah.”

“And so naturally you’re ignorant of the world’s common sense.”

“But, I now know.”

Reinhardt and Elsa both appeared to have accepted Jin's unreasonable existence.

And in the middle of such an atmosphere,

"What's left is to think about what to do from now on."

Jin spoke of his other objective in inviting Reinhardt.

"From now on?"

"Yeah. I gave the Uniflers an ultimatum. They probably won't stop despite that."

Jin folded his arms and said with a serious look on his face.

"Those guys have the catchphrase of 'pre-Great Magic War' or something like that, but in fact, I think they just want political power. At any rate, I can't stomach their methods. However I can't put together tactics or think of strategies, so."

Jin said and Reinhardt nodded.

"I see, I get what you're trying to say. You mean you need a person who can grasp the big picture?"

"I suppose. More precisely, I need the knowledge of someone like that. Because I can get it by using [Transfer Info]."

When Jin said that Reinhardt smiled bitterly and,

"Right, you had that as an option."

He said.

"Actually, it appears to have been a common technique during the predecessor's era? Well, it has its flaws: if the person themselves stubbornly resists the transfer can fail, and it's impossible to transfer information *to* people. In addition, people without the aptitude can't use it."

"Hm? What about when you received the knowledge of your predecessor Adrianna?"

"Oh, that. It's impossible because without having the same Magic Energy pattern as the person the information came from you cannot synchronize it. And for that reason even Reiko spent 1000 years looking for me."

Hearing that, Reinhardt felt discouraged.

“...Is that so. That’s a shame.”

“Can Rai-nii not learn [Transfer Info]?”

Then Elsa spoke out her mind.

“Indeed, if Reinhardt could use [Transfer Info] it would be good, but there’s the requirement of considerable aptitude.”

Despite that let’s try testing for it now, he said, and decided to see with Reiko’s help if it was possible to transfer information from one Magi Crystal to another.

During their talk about how to begin doing that, as peers Jin and Reinhardt sounded very similar.

“Look, the [Magi Formula] is like this and the [Keyword] is like that.”

“Hmm, hm. It looks as difficult as I thought.”

“Well, as we’re just seeing your aptitude it’s okay to not succeed in one go.”

“Got it. I’ll try. [Transfer Info].”

For an instant the Magi Crystal looked to shine off with a pale light. Reiko was continuously using [Trace] to display the Magic Energy’s flow but,

“It’s unfortunate but your aptitude looks to be low. But with training I’m sure you can use it up to level two.”

Jin spoke of his conclusion.

“Level two? How much is that?”

“Let’s see...”

Level one was the knowledge of language, two was movement and behavior patterns, general knowledge was from three to five, special knowledge was from three to seven, and subconscious information was from levels six to eight, Reiko explained. Because of the complex connections of information, the levels varied.

“So level two would be speech, movement, and behavioral patterns, huh...”

Reinhardt was disappointed. However,

“Even so, that means I can make more advanced golems than before!”

His recovery was quick.

“Rai-nii is indeed obsessed with craftsmanship.”

Elsa vacantly muttered from the side.

“...Do you want to try too, Elsa?”

Jin casually asked Elsa.

“Mm, let me.”

And so they tried having Elsa do the same thing.

“[Transfer Info]...How is it?”

“It appears you could use it to up to level three.”

“Whaaat! Elsa, I’m jealous!”

Reinhardt loudly yelled. Looking at him, Elsa stifled a laugh and smiled a little.



“Anyway, that’s all about the aptitude matters, but don’t you have any close people that are well-versed in strategy?”

“I don’t have what I don’t have.”

Reinhardt looked troubled.

“...Sama.”

“Eh?”

Elsa spoke someone’s name. Jin didn’t quite catch it so he asked her to repeat.

“Moritz-niisama.”

“Moritz?”

“He’s Elsa’s eldest brother.”

“Elsa’s brother?”

“Yeah. Moritz-dono has a weak body, but he’s ingenious enough call unmatched.”

The younger brother Fritz was a muscle-brain, and the elder brother the weak but smart type. Somehow it was a family line of extremes. Well, it would be good if the siblings would work together, but for example Elsa’s father Georg Randol von Amber and Reinhardt’s father Wolfgang Randol von Morgan are on bad terms. Siblings don’t necessarily always get along.

“It’s okay to have someone less excellent too though.”

As Laozi’s operation faculties are most likely tens of thousands times better than a human’s after giving him the fundamental knowledge he could simulate things by himself, and probably quickly become skilled.

“Actually.”

Jin then suddenly remembered something.

“Maybe it would be better to make something like strategists or staff officers too.”

“Jin?”

Reinhardt looked puzzledly at the pondering Jin. Jin quickly apologized,

“Ah, sorry. I just thought of something.”

Then,

“Well, it’s not like I need that in a hurry. In addition, I wonder if you could get your hands on full-body armor?”

“Full-body armor?”

“Mh-hm.”

Jin explained. How in Ann’s knowledge, something like ‘strengthened armor’ was described.

"Strengthened armor you say! I'm also interested. It's probably going to be difficult procure one inside Celuroa Kingdom, but let me see what I can do."

Reinhardt's interest was piqued, and he started thinking about how to acquire armor.

"Finally, I was thinking about what I should do from now on, but..."

Jin said, and Reinhardt had a lonesome look on his face.

"Oh, right. I guess this is it, the end of the trip with Jin."

"Eh?"

"Hm? Isn't that what you were talking about?"

"No, no. I'm still interested in traveling. I'm sure there's still many more things I'm unfamiliar with in this world, and I'm also interested in Shouro Empire, see."

"Seriously?"

Jin smiled and nodded.

"Yeah. As if I'd lie about this. It's just that I was thinking that I want to improve my equipment here for a few days."

He explained.

"It's tomorrow, right? The day of crossing River Torres."

Reinhardt nodded.

"That's right. For people there's enough, but there's very few available ships that can board a carriage. If we miss tomorrow I don't know when the next time is."

Hmm, Jin thought.

"I wonder if we could meet up later?"

At that question, Reinhardt said,

"It'll be difficult but I think we could. There's a barrier when crossing the river at the, it's a region around the royal capital with special precautions for confirming how many people enter. When exiting, it's done again and compared, and if the number

rises or falls then that's trouble."

"In other words, it's okay as long as I stay here while you're in the zone of special precautions."

"Well, that's how it is. It'll most likely take five or ten days."

Jin thought once more. If it's five days he'll probably be able to make most of the equipment. The problem was the carriage. Without either Jin or Reiko, there was no one who could make it move normally.

"Father, would you like me to install a Warp Gate near the ruins of that stronghold?"

Reiko proposed.

"That's right... Celuroa Kingdom is a little suspicious. Maybe we should make an advance base there."

"Eeh?"

Jin had to explain things once more to Reinhardt who didn't quite get it.

CHAPTER 19

AN ENDING

“Last but not the least, I’ve got something I want Elsa to hear.”

“What?”

“It’s about Mine.”

Jin said, then Elsa vigorously inclined forwards and,

“Mine! Is she alright!”

She asked, sounding agitated. Despite being surprised by her energy,

“Yeah. She’s already awake and recovering.”

Jin told Elsa who sat back down with a thump.

“I’m glad...”

She whispered.

“Elsa, it could be said that Mine was the one who tempted you and made you go through that dangerous experience. Despite that, you’re worried?”

Reinhardt asked. Jin felt some anger coming out of him and it wasn’t probably just his imagination.

“Mm. But, when I was in danger Mine protected me with her body. Of course I’m worried.”

Elsa answered and Reinhardt sighed and,

“Sigh, of course indeed. I guess that runs in the blood.”

He muttered as if giving up. Elsa found some fault with what he said and,

“Rai-nii, what do you mean?”

She asked. Reinhardt's face became serious.

"Mine is your real mother, I think."

He then informed her. Elsa kicked away the cushions while getting up.

"Rai-nii! Is that, true?"

"Yeah. Mine herself also said so."

This time Jin answered.

Once more Elsa tried to sit down but having kicked off the cushions by accident, she kept going and fell on her behind on the floor...And then toppled over on her back.

"Ow."

"A—are you okay?"

Jin and Reinhardt both worriedly ran over to her. As Elsa and Reinhardt were poor at sitting in seiza, five cushions had been stacked for each of them and so the height difference had been large.

"...My butt hurts...But I'm okay."

Elsa said and stood up while rubbing her butt, pulled the cushions towards herself and sat down. She had tears in her eyes but you couldn't tell if it was from the pain of falling on her backside, or from the happiness of knowing her real mother.

"I want to see Mine."

Elsa looked Jin in the eyes and said. Jin pondered her request. Then he came to a conclusion.

"Alright, got it. Elsa, you can live together with Mine on Kunlun Island. That place is secure and you can easily come and go with the Warp Gates."

In addition, Reiko also approved of that.

"That's right I suppose, this island would have a lot of problems but Kunlun Island was originally a dummy for Hourai Island. So I think it's a good idea."

"The environment's also good there, right? If you lived there then I'd be relieved too."

Also there's no way Mine would be employed again either."

Reinhardt approved of it too, so they decided to invite her to Kunlun Island later.

"In that case, I'll go back to Tellurs for now."

"Mh-hm, please take care of the rest. Just leave the carriage for me to handle, and tell them that I dropped out in the middle of the trip and it should go smoothly."

"Of course. Because you don't want to come in the Celuroa Kingdom's region of special precautions, just tell me when to take a detour or something so we can meet up again."

Then Jin gave Reinhardt a ManaCom.

Lately, the tuning for Magic Energy wavelengths reached great successes, so that they could make calls on around 1000 channels without interference. Compared to radio waves the amount of channels is not at all that much, but as it could cover all the members of Hourai Island it was a very important thing.

"With this you can contact Hourai Island's Laozi. Laozi can convey it to me, and in the case that I'm not around you can just leave a message to Laozi."

"I see, that's good. Right, I suppose I'll make contact regularly. I wonder if nights would be okay."

As expected, the reunion would probably work out easily if Reinhardt kept in contact secretly.

"In that case, I'll also go meet Mine so let's go to Tellurs together"

"Jin-nii, please get Mine here."

And so, Jin and Reinhardt along with Reiko were seen off by Elsa and they warped to Tellurs.



"I probably don't particularly need to see Mine. Give her my regards."

"Got it."

Reinhardt returned to the hotel, while Jin headed to Sally Milsson's clinic.

“Good day.”

This time, there were no patients in the clinic.

“Oh, it’s you. The patient’s condition has improved greatly. Your medicine is really amazing.”

Sally said and greeted Jin.

“Is that so? In that case, would it be alright for her to leave the hospital?”

“Hm? That’s probably okay. But she can’t work too hard, alright?”

“Yeah, okay. The side receiving her wants to have her recover, so.”

Jin said and Sally looked relieved.

“Really? If so, that’s a relief. She’ll probably be healed and back to normal as long as she takes it easy for two more days.”

She said. And so Jin went to sickroom.

“Ah, Jin-sama.”

Mine tried to sit upright but Jin stopped her and,

“Mine, you’re a lot better now I hear?”

He asked. Mine smiled and said,

“Yes, thanks to you my wounds have disappeared. I’m still a little weak in the body, but I’m all good now.”

However, Jin replied,

“No, your recovery is the most important thing. Today I was thinking I’d have you change beds.”

“If not here, then where? ...Could it be?”

Mine’s face sparkled with anticipation.

“Ah, you’ve already got a faint idea? To where Elsa is.”

“Oh, Elsa! ...Bu, but, will Elsa forgive me?”

Mine said and hung her head in unease. Good grief, is this really Mine, Jin thought due to the large change. Maybe the evil spirit in her came out or something, Jin thought.

“It’ll be fine. Also, Elsa knows that you’re her real mother.”

Jin said, and Mine stared at him in wonder.

“Come on, the mother and daughter should introduce themselves. So, let’s go.”

“Y, yes.”

And so Mine was discharged from the clinic. Her walking was still unsteady so Elm and Ash of the SP were called and made to carry her.

“Doctor, thank you for your help.”

As he was leaving Jin turned to Sally and bowed.

“What, you also helped me a lot. I too will try researching restorative medicine. First I’ve decided to test with my own blood.”

“Go for it.”

Soon after they went to where the carriage was, and after confirming no one was around got in. Only at the moment of going through the Warp Gate in the carriage Jin supported Mine, and instantly they warped to Hourai Island. Elm and Ash guarded the carriage.

For now, Reiko also stayed behind with the SP to move the carriage to the ruins of the Unifilers’ stronghold in order to prepare for building the advance base, and she planned to return after that.

“Come on, let’s finish this quick for Father.”

Reiko connected the golem horses she had brought along to the carriage and immediately sat on the driver’s seat, and had the carriage start off at a recklessly fast speed. The SP invisibly followed her.

“O, oi, what is that?”

“A...carriage? How can it be that fast.”

Some bystanders were surprised or doubtful but no more than that, and in two hours Reiko had moved the carriage to the ruins.



Bringing Mine along, Jin returned to Hourai Island. Mine's eyes darted around in confusion after her first Warp Gate experience.

They left the research laboratory for the mansion. It was already dim outside.

And, in front of the mansion there was the figure of a person. Of course, it was Elsa.

Noticing her Mine was startled and began trembling. She stood there petrified as if she couldn't speak.

Elsa also froze when she saw Mine.

Jin quietly stepped away.

"Mo...ther!"

The first one who moved was Elsa.

One step, then another, slowly step-by-step she approached Mine.

On the other hand, Mine was panicking a little and was even starting to step back.

"Mother!"

Suddenly Elsa broke into a run. Then she energetically leapt towards Mine and embraced her.

At first Mine's arms wandered about in the air as if she didn't know what to do, but eventually those arms held Elsa tight.

"Elsa!"

"Mo...ther!"

They both cried.

"...I had no idea my real mother was this close all along. I wasn't alone."

“Sorry, I’ve been a bad mother...But I don’t think that’s something forgiven with just an apology.”

“Mm, it’s...fine, already.”

The two wanted to stay there like that until it was pitch black, but Jin was worried for Mine who was still recovering and called out to them in the end, and finally the two separated.



Afterwards, the two once more went through a Warp Gate and to the mansion in Kunlun Island.

Here the five-colored golem maids', Amethyst's, Aquamarine's, Topaz's, Peridot's, and Ruby's number 100 models were entrusted to look after them.

Elsa who had come here earlier already knew, but Mine had a little, nay, a very strained look on her face.

“So, if you need anything then please contact me with the ManaCom. Take care of your mother.”

“Mm. Thank you for everything.”

“Jin-sama, I cannot thank you enough for everything you’ve done.”

“Mine, get better soon.”

Jin then decided to return to Hourai Island.

“Mother, huh. Lucky for Elsa.”

Unintentionally a soliloquy escaped from his lips.

On the way to the Warp Gate, suddenly he looked up at the sky and the whole sky was full of stars. And then, after returning to Hourai Island Jin finally began to go all out.

CHAPTER 20

QUINTA

When it came time to go all-out in preparing the armaments, Jin consulted Laozi.

First was sorting the information about the Unifilers. The analysis of the Magi Crystal containing the branch head Purcell's copied knowledge was left for Laozi to analyse.

The main task was strengthening Hourai Island.

"There's a lot of things to do, but which one should I start with?"

"Let's see. Intelligence, transport or mobilization otherwise, and military force. I think these three things are important. Don't you think it would be a good idea to list each avenue for improvement in order of priority?"

Laozi said, and Jin followed his advice and thought. And the plan he came up with was,

1. For solid intelligence, send spies everywhere.
2. Development of new ways of movement.
3. Development of new weapons.

These three steps.

"For spies, I think that increasing the amount of current Ninja unit members should do, however..."

"I suppose. If you'd like my opinion, I think that if they aren't used for the reason of guarding My Lord, they should be Automata instead of golems so they can mix in with people and disguise themselves."

"Hmm, that sounds good. Alright, let's do that. Let's make roughly 100 of them, and

call them the ‘Quinta’.”

“The fifth column were spies, weren’t they? A good name, My Lord.”

Laozi approved of it too, and for starters they settled upon the construction of the intelligence unit ‘Quinta’.

The adult-male types that would find it easiest to act numbered 40 and the adult female types 30. For camouflage purposes there were ten teenage boy types and ten teenage girl types, and finally ten small Reiko-types for a total of 100 Automata. Their foundation would be the same as that of Hourai Island’s SP’s, but they would be covered in Magical Skin and have hair to make them resemble humans. Jin would make the principal parts and Laozi would be in charge of the rest.

The next thing they started to work on was ways of movement.

“For movement, I want to make a VTOL or a helicopter.”

“Transport that can takeoff and land anywhere, I see. I think that is a fine idea.”

Finally, with regards to the armaments, because they would operate together with the intelligence and the transport systems, they weren’t in a hurry to make decisions.

Then when they were just about to begin working on the Quinta, Reiko returned.

“Father, the establishment of a base at the ruins of the stronghold has been completed.”

“Ah, good work, Reiko.”

Then Reiko began her report.

“First of all, the wreckage of the stronghold was left as it was.”

The reason was to make it seem to the outside that it had been abandoned.

“The hole in the central part of the stronghold was dug in deeper, and the base was established in a depth of 50 meters. The installation of ManaComs and the Warp Gate have also been taken care of.”

After that, Reiko’s report continued.

“For personnel faculties there are bedrooms, a kitchen, and a toilet. It’s small, but a bath has also been installed.”

Knowing that Jin loved bathing she seemed to have made a smart move.

“There isn’t a stockpile of food yet, but water has been stocked. Enough for about ten people to subsist for a week.”

“Well done. Using the base Reiko made as a standard, let’s establish more of them in other places after this.”

He added one more thing, the establishment of bases, to the list with three points from earlier. He indeed urgently needed some military staff for planning. Because even Laozi had Jin’s knowledge as his base.

“What would you like me to do? Master.”

Then and there came Ann. Right now, Ann didn’t have any particular task assigned for her, so after coming to Hourai Island she’s had nothing to do. It appeared that until now she had been learning some things from Soleil and Luna.

“Oh, Ann.”

Jin briefly explained the details. And then,

“It’s only a little, but I think I can offer some advice.”

She said.

“Oh right. You were something like a private secretary in that fortress, weren’t you, Ann?”

“Yes. I’m afraid to say that despite receiving your care a part of my memories have disappeared, but I can still offer as much help as I can so please do not dispose of me.”

"Dispose of? Why are you suddenly talking about that?"

To the doubtful Jin, Ann told him about the past.

"In that fortress, I was an old model, I also had a low combat capability, and all the soldiers had grown tired of my body too. And so I was simply left alone to decay without even receiving repairs for any breakdowns."

"What the..."

What a cruel story, Jin thought in anger.

"While you're with me, I'll never let something like that happen to the best of my ability. So forget about sad things like that. ...Anyway, please give me your support."

"Yes, thank you very much, master. I will do my utmost to serve you."

"Ann, let's do our best together."

Reiko also encouraged Ann. For some reason Jin had never seen Reiko burn with jealousy towards Ann. It must be because they're 'blood relatives' due to the foundation being of the predecessor's design, Jin thought.

"Alright, in that case let's start afresh. There's a lot of things to take care of, but they don't have to be done in order."

Jin said and looked in turn at Reiko, Ann, then Laozi's fixed terminal.

"Armaments mainly for use against the Unifilers, right?"

Ann asked to confirm.

"That's right. But if possible, I was thinking about keeping them nonlethal."

Jin replied, and after hearing that Ann made a statement.

"In that case, the top priority is collecting intelligence about the Unifilers. The best weapon is knowing your enemy."

Jin agreed with that.

"Mh-hm, that's what I thought. For that we've decided to make the Quinta and dispatch them to various places."

"Is that so. In that case, the next is investigating ancient ruins."

Ann voiced her opinion.

"Ancient ruins?"

"Yes. It's certain that in other ruins like the one I was in, there yet remains equipment from the past. It is important to not let even a part of the advanced knowledge of the past be known by the Unifilers."

"I see, so you mean there's a chance that there's other weapons similar to Gigantes."

"Yes. Gigantes was a trial version of the mass-produced product, but I recall ten of them being manufactured. Three of them were destroyed in battles in those days. One of the remaining seven was destroyed the other day so the likelihood of six remaining is high."

The exchange with Ann turned out to be unexpectedly fruitful.

Laozi had the same information as her, but as Ann's thought patterns weren't designed by Jin she could point out things that Jin had overlooked.

First of all, the maximum priority task was to build the Quinta and dispatch them all around to gather intelligence about the Unifilers as well as ancient ruins. After that was the so-called 'VTOL' carriage vehicle.

While the VTOL was under development, they decided that they would decide on their plans afterwards according to the intelligence they got.

Specifically, once the prototype VTOL was completed its mass production was left to Laozi. Jin then ended up completing the Quinta.

It appeared likely that they could complete the VTOL and the Quinta nearly simultaneously. And then using the completed VTOLs, they would dispatch the Quinta everywhere.

The order of things that was mentioned earlier may have become reversed, but Ann

assured them that this was the most efficient method.

Jin got into planning the VTOL.

"The largest weakness of the VTOL is its bad fuel efficiency. In detail, when staying still the jet engines don't take in air, and so when taking off and landing or stopping in the air the fuel consumption is awful."

Jin remembered an article in a magazine he had once read in the past. However, it didn't apply to Magi Jet Engines.

"If I remember right it's not good or something if a helicopter's rotor surpasses the speed of sound."

This too was from the article in the magazine and so he was uncertain.

"It's got to be a VTOL-type after all."

After deciding the rest was quick. Taking speed, stability, permissible load, et cetera into consideration, he thought about the number and installation method of the Magi Jet Engines.

This was mainly discussed with Laozi. Because his simulation capabilities were helpful.

In the end, two large Magi Jet Engines were installed on both wings in a manner that they could point down for takeoff and landing. In addition, another pair of a bit smaller Magi Jet Engines were used for propulsion. On top of that four tiny Magi Jet Engines for adjusting the direction were installed, each pointing in another direction.

Like this it could float up like a hovercraft, stay still in the air, move in any direction at slow speeds, or sometimes take flight and increase the speed in the direction of travel with the Magi Jet Engines on the wings. At low speeds and when carrying heavy loads the jets could point downwards and work at increasing the lifting power.

By carefully balancing the engines that float the vehicle they believed the change in attitude could be minimized.

"Alright, let's build a small prototype."

Once Jin got into the manufacture he turned even more lively.

Laozi prepared the materials, Reiko carried them, and Jin processed them. Up until this point it was as usual, but now with the addition of Ann checking the details the reliability increased even more.

While mixing in some trial and error, the first prototype model of the VTOL was completed just past the afternoon on the same day.

“Alright, now let’s take it for a test flight.”

To the airport in front of the research facility. This time too Reiko was the test pilot.

“Reiko, it’s up to you.”

“Yes, Father.”

After a small exchange, Reiko boarded the prototype VTOL and started the engines.

Whoooosh, sounded the running Magi Jet Engines. The sound became more high-pitched and the prototype machine lifted off the ground.

“It floats!”

Jin watched its conduct with bated breath.

Its stability looked a little poor, but with Reiko’s reflexes that were dozens of times faster than a human’s she compensated for it, and as planned the machine stayed still at a height of two meters.

“We did it! Reiko, next is moving forward and changing directions at slow speeds!”

Using a ManaCom Jin issued instructions to Reiko. After receiving them Reiko once more operated the prototype machine.

It moved slower than a person would walk. After moving about ten meters, Reiko backed up the prototype machine.

“Hmm, hm. Good, good.”

Then after returning to its original spot the prototype machine turned 180 degrees.

After that it moved sideways, then slowly moved in a circle, carefully confirming the operability and behavior at slow speeds.

"Excellent, Reiko. Now it's time to test its flight capabilities. First try flying normally."

Satisfied with the performance for now, Jin instructed her to move to the next stage of testing it as an airplane.

Reiko lightly waved her right arm to signal understanding, and this time began rising vertically. Five meters, ten meters, 20 meters.

After reaching a height of about 50 meters, she activated the Magi Jet Engines for propulsion. The prototype machine rushed forwards in a snap.

It was rather fast. Reiko increased the altitude and at about 500 meters she began gradually increasing the speed towards the direction of travel with the engines on both wings.

It was difficult. The lifting power decreased and the propulsive power increased. The steering turned tricky. It may have even been impossible if it weren't for Reiko's reaction speed.

But Reiko safely operated the prototype machine and gathered data with an auxiliary Magi Crystal.

By comparing this information in this Magi Crystal with computer support, afterwards the steering of the VTOL would become remarkably easier.

"It's a success!"

Small adjustments were probably necessary, but on this day Hourai Island grew new wings.



That night, Reinhardt made contact. He seemed to have crossed River Torres without any problems, in other words there wasn't anything abnormal going on.

CHAPTER 21

PORT ROCK, FOR JUST A WHILE

The next day, leaving the mass production of the VTOLs to Laozi, Jin started manufacturing the Quinta.

Their structure was based on the SP. Hollow Light Silver skeleton, muscles out of Magical Fibers, and skin out of Magical Skin.

To begin with, they would have about 30% of Reiko's faculties, but usually they would restrain themselves to the level of nimble human.

Because the process needed to be repeated multiple times, with Reiko and Ann both assisting the work was fast. Reiko and Ann built the basic parts like the skeletons, then made the Magi Devices starting with the Control Core.

The countermeasures and such against the Subordination Rewriting Magic were the same as those the SP had, but as they were spies, there was a Magi Recorder added purely for recording.

Furthermore, he added functionality to let them tamper with their physical appearance. Specifically, the length of their hair, color of their eyes, height of their bodies, and their body shapes.

The length of the hair was manipulated, like a certain famous puppet did, by moving the hair in and out through the pores of the skin. The eyes could be changed by swapping the irises like contact lenses. The replacement parts were stored inside the body.

The length could be changed by up to 10 centimeters by adjusting the gap in the joints of the shoulders, elbows, wrists, back, hip, knees, and the ankles. The body shape could be made to look up to two times plumper by adding water between the layers of Magical Skin.

The hair could also be easily dyed a different color. Dyes were also stocked in the equipment.

For offense, they had stun guns and lightning magic. In addition they knew enough

classical martial arts to use against people. Just in case, there was a built-in security device for erasing the memories and information.

The foundation of their movements was the same as that of the SP's. On top of being able to mix among people, thanks to Mine's assistance their general common sense was enhanced. Well, it could be questioned whether or not Mine knew common sense, but at the very least it was preferable to Jin's.

While doing so. Mine was likewise a little surprised by [Transfer Info] but that's a story for another time.

Laozi, with Reiko supporting him at his side, took turns with the repetitive craftsmanship, and as a result somehow the 100 Quinta units had been finished the same morning.

Just as initially planned the breakdown was, sorting by the size, 40 adult male types and 30 adult female types. For camouflage, ten teenage boy types, ten teenage girl types, and ten Reiko-types.

"All right, the names are, let's see..."

The adult male type was named 'Regulus', adult female type 'Deneb' teenage boy type 'Capella', teenage girl type 'Spica', and Reiko type 'Mira'. Each one was numbered starting from 1.

"My Lord, the first VTOL has been completed."

Precisely then Laozi had completed a VTOL.

Jin went outside to look, and there was a matte black VTOL. It had perfect [Stealth] equipment. It was quite large.

According to Laozi, that was because it was meant to also be used as transport.

"Ooh, isn't it nice."

Jin said delightedly, and Laozi asked him to name it.

“Name, huh. Name...Hmm, this would’ve been a better Skylark, huh...”

As it flew up perpendicularly to the ground Jin imagined it as a skylark.

“Stopping mid-air is like a bird of prey, huh...I’ve got it, Falcon!”

A falcon. Falcons didn’t particularly stop mid-air look for prey, but this was Jin.

“Yes, then it shall be called Falcon-1. The plan is to roll out ten units.”

“Alright, I’ll leave it to you.”

Jin was about to start on the next project when Laozi spoke.

“My Lord, Elsa-san on Kunlun Island has called for you.”

“Elsa does? Did something happen?”

“No, she says she wants to have lunch together.”

Jin remembered that about two hours earlier, when he visited Kunlun Island to get Mine’s help in copying a normal commoner’s mannerism, there was talk of that.



“Jin-nii, come on in.”

“Hey, Elsa, Mine.”

“We wished to have the privilege of dining together so we called for you, and I hope we aren’t inconveniencing you.”

Was this really the attitude of that same Mine? If someone said she had been under the effects of [Hypno] they would sound very believable.

“Not at all, if you leave Father by himself he skips on his meals, so you were a big help.”

Reiko who came along made such a revelation.

“Jin-nii too really is obsessed with craftsmanship.”

Elsa said while giggling.

“Is that so, very well then. Come, let us dine.”

Mine had made some freshly-baked bread, plain omelette, vegetable soup with a refreshing taste, grilled fish and fruit salad.

It was just right for lunch.

“Thanks for the meal.”

After eating, Citran juice was brought out.

“Mine, are you okay to work already?”

Jin asked and Mine nodded.

“Yes, I have mostly become better by now and I feel that by working the condition of my body also returns to normal.”

“If that’s the case then fine, but...”

Jin looked at the five-colored golem maids’ number 100 models staying back a bit away from them.

“Those golem maids have done fairly well. But for young la...Elsa, please let me take care of her.”

Mine said, and so Jin told her to not work herself too hard and also advised the golem maids too.

“Umm, so, I’ve got a request, but...”

After she had done tidying up Mine spoke.

“Hm? What is it?”

“Um, if possible then, Elsa and...me, we’d like to go buy a change of clothes and some such, but...”

Because they had come here with only the clothes they happened to wear, they didn’t have even a single change of clothes. Jin could make them, but he was afraid of what they may think if he made underwear, and Mine couldn’t deal with the silk of a Ground

Spider.

"That's right, somewhere that's not dangerous... Oh, I think Port Rock should be fine."

The port city Port Rock. The place where Jin had met with Elsa and Reinhardt. The nostalgic town where he had entered the golem boat race. Even the Unifilers probably didn't have a hand in what was going on all the way there.

"Port Rock. I miss it."

Elsa also apparently thought the same, as she spoke of the town.

"That's right, I was also there and I don't think the products there were bad. So please, if it's at all possible."

And so, Jin took Mine to Port Rock, or so he was thinking when,

"Jin-nii, I want to go too."

Elsa said.

"Hmm, well, it's at the southern end of Elias Kingdom and there's probably no danger, so sure."

After thinking it through Jin gave his permission. Well, his plan was also to have some of the just completed Quinta work both as guards and insert them in the area.

Then Jin suddenly realized it. The Automata also needed clothes. And so he proposed to Mine,

"That's all fine and good. I'd also like to ask you to buy sets of clothes for my Automata."

She readily agreed.

"Yes, I'll do that."

First they warped from Kunlun Island to Hourai Island together with Jin. The security measure of not being able to warp there without Jin's Magic Energy pattern was unchanged.

Jin called for the adult female type Automata Deneb-30.

"Yes, Chief."

For now, she was wearing the same clothes as the golem maids were. He didn't know what Elsa and Mine would say if she showed up naked in front of the two.

"Guard Elsa and Mine and go to Port Rock."

"Understood."

There was also the reason that without Jin's Magic Energy pattern they couldn't come nor go.

Then Jin handed ten gold coins to her. In other words, a million Torr.

"Elsa, Mine, this here Deneb-30 will take care of the money."

He knew that Mine and Elsa had almost no money.

"Jin-sama, sorry for this. And thank you very much."

Understanding Jin's consideration for them, Mine bowed. Was this really the same Mine, Jin bore the doubt for the nth time.

"You probably know this already but, everything about Kunlun Island, Hourai Island, and the Warp Gates are an absolute secret."

"Yes, I'll never say a word about them."

Jin had already given orders about that to Deneb-30, but without an oral confirmation he just couldn't relax.



In an instant they warped from Hourai Island to Port Rock. They exited in a marine cavern near the coast. As Deneb-30 had the basic knowledge copied to her, she could guide the two into the town without getting lost.

"I've missed this place."

"Me too."

Elsa had left Port Rock with a carriage on the 16th of February. It was about a month and a half ago.

"We arrived here in the blink of an eye. Jin-sama's magic skill is terrific, isn't it?"

Once more Mine praised Jin. Elsa was also of the same opinion.

"Mm."

As they had stayed here for almost a month, Mine more or less knew the lay of the land and they were able to go to the clothing store without getting lost.

In this world for nobles there were made-to-order expensive clothes, and for commoners there were ready-made and second hand clothes. The place they went to this time was a store for ready-made clothes. It was a store the servants like Mine used.

At the store, Mine bought three changes of maid clothes comprised of a dark blue dress and an apron for herself along with ten pairs of underwear.

Elsa chose things like a dress, a blouse, a skirt, et cetera, and also ten pairs of underwear.

The reason for buying a somewhat large amount of underwear was probably because they didn't anticipate going shopping often.

For the Automata they started with underwear and then chose a dress, a blouse, and a skirt.

"Let's go buy some cloth and then go back."

Mine who could also tailor clothes herself bought a rather large amount of linen cloth. Everything was carried by Deneb.

After finishing their shopping, at the time of their return the long spring day had already begun to get darker.

On the way back, Elsa glimpsed towards the harbor and recognized a number of floating catamarans.

(Marcia, do your best.)

Without a word, in her heart Elsa bid farewell to her dear friend and got on her way back home.

CHAPTER 22

RAILGUN

The third day of full-scale operations.

“Now then, what to do after the Quinta?”

Jin personally wanted to quickly start on the power suit. However, Ann said,

“Hourai Island could be said to be a maritime nation, right? An aircraft carrier ought to be built to work as a frontline base.”

She had apparently got the idea of an aircraft carrier from Jin’s knowledge.

“Having the air war potential be dispatched from Hourai Island takes too much time. Don’t you think that an aircraft carrier equipped with a Warp Gate large enough to transmit planes is needed?”

“I see what you mean.”

Each and every detail of what Ann said was reasonable.

“Alright, shall we build one then?”

Jin started planning with Laozi.

It would be a 200 meter-class one. Because it would have a Warp Gate, it wouldn’t need to carry any more planes than necessary.

Movement would be with Magi Water Jets. Rather than having a single large one, it would use six small ones. It would then also be able to change directions just by adjusting the machinery’s output.

The deck would have a two-layered structure. The whole lower portion would be for the use of planes that need to make a takeoff run, while the top portion would be for the use of VTOLs.

Three Warp Gates large enough to accommodate all of the current plane models would be installed.

It would be armed with laser artillery. The main battery would have six cannons, and the secondary battery would have six cannons. There would be a hundred mounted small guns each capable of individually burst firing. All of them would have separate Control Cores. Well, that was just something similar to computer controls.

It'd have ten [Water Jet] cannons as a supplement. Jin also wanted live ammunition but that hadn't been developed.

The crew would be the Navy golems, the Marines. 100 golems seemed to no longer be enough and so the plan was to increase the amount by another 100. The number of Air Force and Army personnel would be similarly increased.

The plan was naturally for the Air Force golems to man the VTOLs, while the Army golems were to be on duty at the advance base and work as combat engineers.

The structure material would be Adamantite on top of which five layers of steel would be affixed, with the surface coated Mithril. The ship's displacement would be about 20,000 tons.

The crew would number 30. In theory the cruising range would be infinite, but that was only limited to areas where there was Ether. The cruising range with the loaded Magic Energy would be around 10,000 kilometers.

Improved versions of high-speed boats were also planned to be built and loaded on the ship.

Jin decided to build three ships with the above-mentioned specifications and gave them the names 'Hotaka', 'Myoukou', and 'Asama'.

As one would expect, it wasn't something achievable in one or two days, and so with Laozi taking the lead the manufacturing was done without rushing. Jin checked every important detail and manufactured the new equipment himself.

Now to what Jin would do after that.

"First of all, please produce small arms that can fire live ammunition."

Ann said to Jin. She was acting like quite the manager.

“Hmm, I want to make something that could at least destroy Gigantes with just kinetic energy alone, you see.”

By now not even a shred of self-restraint could be found. Now that it had come to this it was almost a refreshing change.

“But it seems like the recoil would become terrifying, huh...”

There probably wouldn’t be a problem if it was mounted on an aircraft.

And so Jin began constructing what was fundamentally a slingshot. It would shoot shells with the power of Magical Muscles made out of a Sea Dragon’s leather

By now it was a variant of the catapult.

It had the flaw that the shot would fall off if it faced downwards, but that was resolved by adding a function that would hold the shot in place to one end of the Magical Muscles. Ordinarily it would keep hold of the shot but at the moment of shooting out it would release the shot.

Two separate rails above and below would work as the gun barrel, and the Magical Muscles would move the shot between those two rails to launch it.

“Alright, the prototype is complete.”

The prototype model with a length of about a meter was complete just before noon.

As Jin had been invited for lunch by Elsa, he thought that he’d have a single go at test firing and then go to Kunlun Island.

“Reiko, please try shooting this as a test.”

As he wasn’t sure of the recoil he ended up asking Reiko.

“Yes, Father.”

The Magical Muscles could be extended by circulating Magic Energy through them so setting the slingshot was easy unlike with a regular slingshot. The shot was a steel ball with a diameter of 2 centimeters.

“It’s a test so please use it at its full strength.”

“Understood.”

Reiko turned to aim horizontally towards the sea.

“Firing!”

She pulled the trigger. The Magical Muscles made out of a Sea Dragon’s leather unleashed their absurd force.

The bullet, accompanied with a bang, flew out not in an arc but in a straight line. In an instant after being shot out it was no longer in sight of Jin. However, the clouds vanished after the shockwave. It felt like the air was ionized and shining.

“Ah, right, that sound seems to have come from surpassing the speed of sound. But as I thought it probably wasn’t able to free itself from the gravitational pull. Or so I’d like to think. ...It didn’t, right?”

Jin was shocked by the power. On the other hand, Reiko who had done the shooting had taken a small step back because of the recoil after all.

“Reiko, how was it?”

“Yes, it was my first time so due to the recoil I unintentionally took a step backwards, but starting from the next shot I’ll do fine.”

After hearing that, Jin thought that after some small revisions the prototype model could be made to be one of Reiko’s personal weapons.



“Yesterday, I saw a boat that looked like Marcia’s one.”

After lunch on Kunlun Island, Elsa brought up the topic.

“There were several catamarans like hers floating in the harbor.”

“Huh, seems that Marcia’s also working hard.”

“Mm. I didn’t see her though.”

Ah well, if they had met, Marcia would’ve asked Elsa why she was there or it would’ve become complicated in some other way, Jin thought and bitterly smiled inside.

“Jin-nii, what are you up to now?”

Elsa asked and Jin didn't have anything in particular to hide so he answered without hesitation.

"Now I'm reinforcing Hourai Island's military, I guess. I dislike war and such, but it's necessary for protection, and thinking about what those guys did to you makes my blood boil."

After hearing that, Mine who had been silently listening until now interjected.

"Eh, was something done, to Elsa?"

She was very surprised. Elsa calmly replied.

"No. Nothing like that. But I was threatened a lot."

And then she spoke about Purcell. Apparently she hadn't told Mine until now. After being told the story, Mine was angered and,

"What! How could this be! Jin-sama, for the sake of the world you mustn't let people like them live!"

She spoke some radical words. Ah, her heart hasn't changed after all, Jin thought while smiling forcibly.

"I know. Once I'm adequately prepared I'll destroy them."

Jin replied and left his seat.

"Well then, I'll be going back to Hourai Island to resume working. Thanks for the lunch. Thanks also for the clothes."

Jin said while handing the clothes they had gone to buy yesterday over to Reiko.

"Mm. Jin-nii, see you, at lunch tomorrow."

"Uh-huh. See ya."

Then Jin returned to Hourai Island.



Because the two rails working as the barrel had grown hot and deformed after having Reiko test fire it multiple times, the testing was ended.

“Ah, well. Even steel is no good with rapid fire after all, huh.”

And so he decided to make them out of Adamantite. The melting point of Adamantite was approximately 4500 degrees Celsius. Even if it was heated up to the point of glowing white it wouldn’t melt. It was a metal that would be unworkable by any means without Craft Magic.

The specific gravity of steel was about 7.9, while Adamantite’s was about 19.3. It was over twice as heavy, but with Reiko it probably wouldn’t be a problem.

As a bonus, with this it could also double as a blunt weapon. Its overall length was 1.5 meters. A little bit longer than Reiko herself.

The shots were cartridge-style in groups of 10. At a diameter of 3 centimeters they were a little bit larger than the ones used in the prototype.

The normal ones were steel balls. If penetrating force was important there were Adamantite-coated shots, and when power was important there were lead shots.

In the case of lead, as they impacted the target they would deform and stick to it, transmitting nearly 100 percent of the kinetic energy to the target.

“The barrel doesn’t have rifling, but this power ought to be enough.”

At any rate, he decided to add sights as at the highest setting the muzzle speed was around Mach 20, so the gun would fire at straight lines as far as the eye can see.

“Hmm, the name is...What a bother, by now it should be called a railgun.”

In the sense that the shots were fired from between rails he wasn’t wrong.

“Father, thank you very much for this wonderful weapon. From now on I can eliminate Father’s enemies with this.”

Reiko said, and,

“No, take the enemy in appropriate consideration first.”

Jin didn't forget to give her a reminder.

"My Lord, there's something I would like to report on."

Jin guessed that the first stage of the work was complete and Laozi came to tell him of it.

"Mm, what is it?"

"We copied information from Mine-san for the Quinta, but in doing so we discovered something that resembled traces of mental manipulation, and so I came to report just in case."

"Mental manipulation? [Hypno]?"

"No, it's nothing that powerful. It's most likely something like [Seduce]."

"[Seduce]?"

Jin had never heard of the magic before.

"Yes. This too is from Ann's knowledge. It's a magic that points one's thoughts towards a specific action. By using it to promote the person's own desires they mostly don't notice anything unnatural. The surrounding people don't, nor does the person being manipulated."

"Hmm..."

Mine's behaviour towards Elsa seemed strange and stubborn. It being because of [Seduce] would be fairly consistent. However, the caster was unknown.

"So, it's been cancelled by now, right?"

"Yes. I suspect it was due to the shock on the head, or on the body in general."

"Alright, please look into magic for cancelling it."

"As you wish."

There was a possibility that from now on, opponents using things like that would increase. Maybe even Elsa's brother Fritz being affected wasn't out of the question.

Jin thought that this probably wasn't dealt with by ordinary methods, and focused his mind even further.



That night, Reinhardt made contact at the regular time and said that instead of approaching the capital city Esaia, he was preparing to cross the river Azul in a town called Dali.

It seemed like Jin would have to wait three or four more days still.

CHAPTER 23

DRUGBASE

Ann advised that brand-new clothes would be conspicuous, and so second-hand clothes were decided upon

Deneb-1 of the Quinta put on the clothes she had bought with Elsa and Mine, and was sent to buy clothes for the others.

She was also sent to buy clothes from Blue Land, and within the day by repeating this the Quinta all got clothes and they could be sent to live in towns without people finding out.

“Well then, I’ll be counting on you.”

“Understood, Chief.”

Starting with Blue Land, Port Rock, and other places with Warp Gates like the stronghold’s ruins they were scattered about everywhere.

They were all expected to regularly report to Laozi every morning and night.

“With this the first task is done.”

Jin made sure that everyone had warped and took a deep breath.

“Now, I wonder what I should be doing next?”

Of course, Ann was the one to reply.

“Master, I’d like to know about the medicine that was research the other day. How is the blood used in it preserved?”

“Hm? It’s just in cold storage.”

“And that’s simply the blood in its original state?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

Then Ann became visibly disconcerted and,

"That's not good! Preserving blood is a more complicated task!"

She said, so Jin asked Laozi,

"Laozi, Ann says this, but...?"

He then got a reply.

"Yes, she is correct. I found that out last night while arranging the information copied from Ann, and immediately took action. My apologizes for being late in reporting the matter to My Lord."

Jin was relieved.

"Is that so? That's fine then. It's such a rare material that if it got spoiled that would be a real waste. ...So, if cold storage is no good then how exactly is it stored?"

Ann answered that.

"What's important isn't the red part, but rather the liquid portion. Once separated, it can be stored in an Ether Stocker with nearly no deterioration."

"Ether Stocker?"

It was a word even Jin didn't know of.

"Ether Stocker is a storehouse that has the Ether amount in its air raised to at least 20 percent. It's possible to store materials holding Magic Energy in there semi-permanently without deterioration."

Ann explained. This was good news.

"Last night a storehouse was built and the blood was moved there instead."

Laozi reported. It was after the fact, but Jin didn't have any intention of blaming him on a matter like this either. Instead he'd rather commend Laozi by telling he did good.

"Is that so, what a relief in that case. And so, Laozi, have you finished studying the proper recipe for the restorative medicine?"

"Yes. The parts that were unclear have been completed, and the process is now known."

And so at once Jin went to producing medicine. After its effectiveness was verified on Mine, its demand would probably increase from now on, he concluded.

The centrifuge was just as before. However, while it wasn't necessary to do it at subsonic speeds, because as a result it shortened the filtration process that would've been the next step they decided to do it.

"So normally the separated serum would need to be filtrated?"

"Yes. Filtrated three times. However, thanks to Reiko-san we can get it done with after just the final filtration process."

With the use of Reiko as the subsonic centrifuge, two steps of the filtration process could be completely skipped.

This time they processed about ten liters.

The pure serum turned out to total about three liters. The leftover remnants were useful for various medicines or even poisons and so they were left in storage in the Ether Stocker.

"This could almost be called liquid Ether, huh."

Ann nodded at Jin's remark.

"Yes. If Magi Crystals are crystallized Ether, then this could surely be said to be liquid Ether."

The purity was over 70 percent. According to Ann crossing 30 percent was enough for practical use, and so Jin was looking forward to it.

"Once it takes in Ether, the impurities will settle and its purity will increase further. That's then called a drugbase."

It appeared that the true serum contained components that took in or otherwise combined with Ether. For devil beasts that had a lot of Magic Energy these components appeared to be more numerous.

"In that case, I wonder what would happen with Father's blood?"

Reiko who had been silent until now interrupted.

“I expect that Father most likely has more Magic Energy than a Sea Dragon.”

“What are you...Hmm.”

Jin pondered. Indeed, Jin’s hypothesis was that he took in Ether through the lungs and it dissolved into his blood. If that was the case, then surely the faculties in his blood that took in Ether would be numerous, considering his large amount of Magic Energy.

It was a similar relationship as with oxygen and red blood cells. If the red blood cells were numerous, as a result one would have a high ability to take in oxygen-

“Alright, how about we try testing with my blood one of these days?”

Jin said, although he wasn’t very keen on the idea.

Going back to square one, Jin hurriedly built an Ether Box. It had four times the capabilities of an Ether Stocker.

“Hmm, it’s best to put it here.”

Jin said while putting the drugbase in the Ether Box the size of a large refrigerator.

“Yes, one day should be enough. The remaining impurities will also settle, so it’s killing two birds with one stone.”

The same day they processed 20 liters more, producing a total of about ten liters of drugbase.



Today’s lunch was Mine’s high-quality freshly baked bread, similar quality Citran marmalade, Pelshka juice, and stir-fried vegetables.

After the meal, Jin told about Reinhardt’s news to Elsa.

“This time he’s at River Azul. He was complaining about how he has to wait around once again.”

“Mm. On our trip to Port Rock it also took us a week to cross the two rivers.”

“Really, what’s that country thinking about. Even Reinhardt-sama needs to be very careful or it’ll be dangerous.”

Jin was also worried a little, but he thought that there was no way they’d attack another country’s diplomat in broad daylight, and with that he left back to Hourai Island for the day.



“Now then, if I have the Quinta look for armor for the golem suit research, I wonder if I could make something in the afternoon.”

Jin thought about what he could do right now.

“We don’t possess many means of travel on the land, right? I was looking into it the other day, automobiles, were they? I think that some transport technology like that should be developed for the use of the army.”

Jin agreed with Ann’s advice. Tanks, armored vehicles, military trucks and such came to his mind.

“Oh right, I also built that suspension device for the carriage. It would be good if those golem arms could be used.”

Promptly he threw himself into planning.

Tank treads were troublesome and so he instead of them he’d increase the amount of wheels to eight. Rubber probably wouldn’t be durable enough, so he’d substitute Sea Dragon’s leather for it.

The eight wheels would have independent suspension, the engine would have eight cylinders, or rather eight golem engines. One for each wheel. The frame and the armor sheets would be made out of Adamantite.

To see outside in times of emergency he used a window that could open and close, but normally an extended Magic Screen would be used to give a 360 degree view as if there were no walls at all. It was an exceptional item that could even see far into the distance. Of course, it also had a night vision feature.

The armaments were one laser cannon, one railgun (cannon-type), and one water jet.

The crew would be four people. A ManaCom and a barrier deployment feature would also be installed.

For times when it got stuck in mud a wire rope and a winch would be installed.

Furthermore four supporting Magi Jet Engines would be prepared to be able to make it lighter up to a fifth of its weight.

The inside would be fully furnished with an air conditioner and two folding beds where the crew could sleep in turns despite it getting cramped.

More and more equipment were added as they kept popping into Jin's mind. The technical specifications were outrageous.

"Alright, how about something like this."

"Master, storage for food, water, and medicine are also required. And a floodlight on top of that."

Ann pointed out what it lacked. He decided to make the floodlights able to emit infrared and ultraviolet light in addition to visible light.

By teaching the basic design to Laozi, Jin's workload was lightened as he had to only make the important parts no one else could build.

Like this the third day turned into night.



At night, there was a conversation with Reinhardt.

"I'm in Dali. It's crowded like Tellurs was. It seems that suspicious-looking people are hanging around."

"Will you be okay?"

"Yeah, even this town has got soldiers dispatched from Shouro Empire, and because I asked them as guards there's no need for you to worry."

“Okay, if that’s the case.”

“Oh, right. I had an unexpected meeting.”

“With who?”

“It’s someone you know too, Jin.”

“Someone in Celuroa Kingdom who I know...Is it Stearina-san?”

“Precisely. You see, she’s returning home after reporting to the royal palace.”

CHAPTER 24

INVITATION

The lake Azul is located at the west side of Celuroa Kingdom's capital Esaia, and it is from this huge lake that the river Azul flows out of.

Along with the eastern river Torres, Esaia has what amounts to a natural moat.

Of course, there being no bridges, these rivers must be crossed using boats.

Consequently, just like in Tellurs, to cross the river one must reserve a boat and wait for three to four days.

Reinhardt –who had parted from Jin and Elsa– had on the 10th of April been stopped on the checking station, then on the 11th of April he had arrived at Dali and ended up waiting for a boat.

And then on the next day, Reinhardt had gone sightseeing around Dali.

“Oh my, Reinhardt-sama.”

A voice called out to Reinhardt who turned around to find the charming bronze-haired and reddish-brown eyed Celuroa Kingdom's foremost Magi Craftsman, Stearina Gamma.

“Well, look here. Stearina-dono.”

Reinhardt greeted her and Stearina glared at him with upturned eyes.

“My my, hearing such formal language from you makes me feel truly lonely.”

Despite her seductive gestures Reinhardt wasn't perturbed.

“Oh, please excuse me, Stearina-san”

“Hmm, you are forgiven.”

Stearina said, then looked around restlessly at the surroundings, then asked Reinhardt.

“You’re by yourself today? Not with Jin-kun?”

“Yeah, Jin’s doing something off on his own for a while.”

Reinhardt answered a bit obscurely. Hearing that, Stearina’s face fell and she spoke.

“Is that the case? That’s a bit unfortunate. I really wanted to have a good talk with him.”

With a sarcastic laugh Reinhardt said,

“Sorry, but you’ll have to do with me.”

Stearina then laughed and took a bow towards Reinhardt.

“I’m kidding, Reinhardt-sama. Are you free today? If you’ve got some time, won’t you keep company with me?”

Reinhardt didn’t have any particular plans so he agreed.

“Sure. Do you know anywhere interesting?”

“Ehehe, you can look forward to it.”

Stearina said and smoothly entangled her left arm with Reinhardt’s right one, and they began walking like that.

“Come on in.”

Where Sterina guided Reinhardt was an ordinary house.

A two-storey stone house, you could call it standard for Celuroa Kingdom. The windows were cut out to be on the larger side, and one part of the windows were fitted with glass.

Behind the house was a waterway, apparently connected to the river Azul.

“This is my second home.”

Stearina's main house was on the other side of river Azul, but apparently she had loaned a house here as returning to the capital would always require a wait of three to four days.

"I use it more than 50 days a year, so it's cheaper than an inn."

She said and opened the door, showing Reinhardt in.

"Welcome back, young lady."

An automata that looked like a butler past his middle age came to greet them.

"I'm back. Zafio, we've got guests so please take care of things. Also, stop calling me young lady."

"As you wish, young lady."

The Automata said and seemingly went off to do something, disappearing into the back of the house.

"Come on!"

Apparently the butler Automata was called Zafio.

"Good grief. No matter how many times I tell him he keeps calling me a young lady, even though I'm already an aunt in my thirties, right?"

However, Reinhardt shook his head and,

"No no, Stearina-san is still a young lady, for sure."

He said.

The reason Zafio kept calling her young lady was surely because of his technical specifications. Stearina had programmed him that way so he could do nothing else. That's how Reinhardt saw through the situation.

He saw through it, and on top of that managed to flirt with Stearina.,

"Oh my, oh my, you flatter me. I wonder if Reinhardt-sama is experienced with wooing women, unlike Jin-kun?"

"Well, I wonder."

Reinhardt smoothly exchanged lines. Stearina lightly glared at him.

“My, how odious.”

They had a back-and-forth like that, then Zafio came back.

“The preparations are complete, young lady. Dear guest, this way, please.”

Zafio told them, then Stearina and Reinhardt followed after him.

At the end of the hallway was a room, and Zafio opened the door and,

“Go on in”

He invited the two inside.

In front of them in the spacious room was a large window, and through it a scrupulously maintained garden could be seen. The window surely faced south, as there was plenty of light shining in.

In the middle of the room was a simple yet good-looking round table, on top of which were two cups of Teee faintly emitting steam.

“There’s many things I want to talk to you about. The walls had ears in Egelia Kingdom so the topics we could talk about were very limited, no?”

Reinhardt could hardly fathom the meaning behind those words, so he decided to noncommittally dodge answering.

“Well, we don’t really have that close a relationship, although I do recall us having talked fairly well.”

Stearina then smiled impishly and spoke.

“Oh my, are you being on guard against me?”

She continued further,

“We didn’t really have a good talk regarding the Unifilers, no?”

Even Reinhardt got surprised when she spoke.

“I did tell you the other day that I received an invitation to join the Unifilers, right?”

"Yeah, but wasn't that something you shouldn't talk about with people from Egelia Kingdom?"

"I suppose. But I thought it'd be better if I told Reinhardt-sama and Jin-kun about that. But now this is Celuroa Kingdom, and I don't have to concern myself with Egelia Kingdom."

Stearina said and finally Reinhardt too was interested in hearing what she had to say.

"The Unifilers came into contact with me about a year ago. I remember them saying something like 'lend us your strength to change this world'."

Stearina took a sip of Teee and continued after taking a breather.

"Please think about it, they said and temporarily left, but about five days later they came back, and after that they came every day."

If Jin was here to hear this, he'd probably think it sounded like a quack religion.

"Each time what they used to persuade me with changed. 'Money', 'political power', and after that...Oh, right, they even alluded to compensating me with 'men'. Do you think I'd even want to be rewarded with men?"

Stearina said and laughed.

"I clearly refused about five times. After that the person stopped coming, but as they left they said 'you will regret this'..."

"How should I say this, what a stereotypical threat."

Reinhardt too took a sip of the Teee. The aroma was rather pleasant.

"After that, there was a time when I got kidnapped."

"Eh?"

"The details are an embarrassment so please excuse me regarding them. At that time I was rescued by the kingdom's knights and that's why I'm here and safe."

"So that's how it was..."

Reinhardt thought that then what happened to Elsa wasn't a single occurrence.

“Today two knights of the kingdom should be guarding me secretly.”

“I hadn’t noticed.”

That was somewhat expected for Reinhardt who wasn’t a military officer.

“And so Reinhardt-sama, you’re also in the same position as I was, so please try to be a bit more aware of it.”

“I suppose so...”

After that the two continued with some small talk. The topics were all around, and it was apparent that Stearina had wanted to once more meet with Jin to talk about all kinds of things.



“And that’s how it was.”

Reinhardt’s long story was over with that.

“Be careful, alright?”

“Yeah, I’ll make sure not to take strolls by myself after this.”

“Mh-hm, you do that.”

With that, Reinhardt hung up his hotline(?) for the day.

CHAPTER 25

GOOD MOOD

“Invitation, then abduction, huh.”

Jin was thinking after hearing Reinhardt's story.

“Master? Reinhardt-san is the person who we travelled with until recently, right?”

Ann asked about that to confirm.

“Yeah, that's right.”

“Master, are you close with him?”

“Hmm, I suppose.”

“In that case, is it not risky to not have him and your other friends guarded?”

Ann described the possibility of a so-called ‘backdoor attack’ situation.

“There's no doubt that Hourai Island's offensive capabilities are the best in the world. Defensive abilities too. But master is different.”

“Eh?”

“What would happen if master's own weakness was attacked? How to deal with it must be thought out.”

It was a fair argument. This time he had been able to save Elsa, but what about for example Hanna from Kaina Village? Or Marcia from Port Rock? Beana or Earl Kuzuma from Blue Land? Prince Ernest from Egelia Kingdom's royal castle?

Or Reinhardt?

If they were kidnapped and made hostage, what would Jin do? It wasn't known if it would be possible to simply cut them down.

“You're right. The SP must be augmented, and those people protected from the Unifilers.”

And in this manner Jin decided to augment the number of the SP. It was already late that day so he decided to leave it for the next day, then returned to his mansion and fell asleep.

Jin obediently going to sleep was also because Reiko was being scary.



After having breakfast, Jin decided to promptly increase the SP's numbers.

He decided to permanently station some in Kaina Village, Port Rock, Blue Land, and Egelia Kingdom's royal castle. Two would secretly guard Reinhardt.

Thinking of their general purpose, he decided to go with all adult female types. As he already had a template 10 copies were soon complete.

"Your names are, let's see, 'Iris', 'Azalea', 'Cattleya', 'Lotus', 'Cherry', 'Camellia', 'Erica', 'Lobelia', 'Sage', and 'Cosmos'."

To keep the theme of flower names, Jin feverishly came up with names.

They were immediately dispatched to places where there were Warp Gates, but the ones headed to Egelia Kingdom's royal castle ended up waiting for the rollout of the VTOLs and would be dispatched together with the Quinta.

"Now then, next is..."

"There's just one matter, master."

Lately Ann had become like a staff officer. He was worried whether or not Reiko would be jealous, but mysteriously they seemed to be able to share roles, so Jin was relieved.

"Master is a human. Therefore let's consider something for master's safety."

Jin also agreed with that.

"Golem suit, night vision goggles, helmet, and a battle suit."

While thinking of ideas one thing sprung to his mind.

“No wait, the drugbase we prepared yesterday should be complete by now.”

Medicine that could heal Jin’s body was of maximum priority.

“Oh, that’s right.”

And so Jin went to open the Ether Box and retrieved the drugbase.

It emitted a faint light while in a vessel made out of crystal.

“It’s magnificent. I’ve never seen a drugbase that contains this much Magic Energy.”

“Alright, what’s left is only to load this with magic and it should be good.”

There was a trick to it like when inscribing a Magi Crystal with a Magi Formula.

“Father, please leave that to me.”

Here’s where Reiko volunteered.

“The other day I had a chance to learn healing magic at the healer Sally’s place. She was able to use magic up to the high-level spell [Medicare].”

“Hm, [Medicare]? If I recall correctly, wasn’t that the spell I thought was Shouro Empire-style?”

Jin posed a question.

“That place is near Shouro Empire, and because of that closeness I suppose both sides have dealings?”

Reiko stated her conjecture. Well, even if Jin disputed that no conclusion could come out of it, so that talk was over for now.

“In that case, I’ll leave it to you Reiko.”

“Yes.”

Reiko nodded and increased the output of her Ether Converter and Mana Driver up to ten percent, then refined her Magic Energy.

“[Medicare].”

For an instant the drugbase shone, and once it lessened the drugbase became a pale blue restorative medicine.

“Ann, how is it?”

Jin asked and Ann examined the medicine.

“It’s an excellent piece of work. The highest grade of restorative medicines.”

She gave it the stamp of approval.

“Hmm, as expected from Reiko.”

After receiving praise Reiko smiled happily.

“Alright then, let’s portion it to small vials.”

Jin made small vials out of muscovite, then Reiko and Ann filled them with medicine. About 50 milliliters went into a bottle.

As there was ten liters of it, it was a considerable amount of work. On top of that this time the vials were in the style of ampoules. Without containing air, they were also suitable for long-term preservation.

Because they were made out of muscovite you could see the contents and they wouldn’t splinter easily. As muscovite was soft opening the ampoules was easy.

He made about 200 ampoules, 50 of which would be stocked on Hourai Island and the rest would be at hand in the advance base, armored vehicles, etc.

According to Ann, with the purity of the medicine being so high, it could be stored with nearly no deterioration.

Just in case, he decided to make an improved version of a small refrigerator which could also work as an Ether Stocker where the medicine would be kept. Then he could have peace of mind.

“Now then, is it finally time for my equipment?”

“Let’s build them one by one.”

Ann also agreed.

"The preparation of the materials is ready."

Laozi's human-type terminal was also here to tell him that.

"Master, before suddenly building armor, I think it would be better to first produce equipment to guard each individual body part, if you would like."

Jin understood Ann's advice.

"I see."

Jin who already didn't know what to do after wanting to make armor out of the blue followed Ann's advice.

"Would the helmet be a good start?"

"Mh-hm, a helmet for sure."

Jin could already imagine it. With things like a visor or goggles, a telecommunication function, a light projector and such attached, a science fiction special effects helmet so to speak.

"The body can't be anything else than light silver, huh."

If it was too heavy his neck wouldn't support it.

"A ManaCom to be able to talk with Reiko and Laozi among others."

One idea after another sprung forth.

"Let's also install a small but strong floodlight. And make sure that it can emit infrared and ultraviolet light in addition to visible light."

It was going swimmingly.

"Let's make sure the visor part doesn't only impede light, but also has a night vision feature and something that lets me see infrared light."

He looked to be really having fun.

"Coat the exterior with a composite of Mithril and Adamantite, and cushion the

interior with Gulaschwamm for sure."

Gulaschwamm was basically a sponge.

"I can already see the plans coming to life indeed."

Laozi said while laying the materials Jin mentioned down on the workbench.

"All right, let's build it!"

Jin's voice was lively. Reiko who was next to him also seemed to become happier.

Jin went on a roll and after about an hour the prototype helmet was completed.

He tried putting it on and,

"Hmm, it's so-so."

Jin said while making corrections to parts of the Magi Formula with magic.

"Okay, it ought to be something like this. ...I've already built it, but it would be good to have a simple gas mask or rather oxygen supply too, huh."

Apparently he wanted to make it useful in places with miasma, volcanic gases, et cetera, or at high altitudes with thin air.

"Alright, let's build the prototype model two!"

In his good mood, with his momentum he built four prototype helmets during the morning and decided on the model number one for light use, and the model number four for use when an oxygen tank function needs to be attached.

CHAPTER 26

NEW EQUIPMENT

After finishing the helmet, Jin kept thinking.

“Father, it’s soon lunchtime. Didn’t you have a promise with Elsa-san to have lunch together?”

Reiko said and Jin once more remembered.

“Ah, that’s right. Well, shall we go to Kunlun Island then?”

“Yes.”

The habit of having lunch with Elsa was very good for Jin who, if left alone, would fall into a disorderly way of life.

And that’s why lately even Reiko had been starting to be sympathetic with Elsa and Mine.

Jin warped to Hourai Island along with Reiko.

“Welcome, Jin-sama.”

Mine had come to greet them.

“I came for lunch today too.”

Jin said and Mine replied,

“Elsa’s been waiting.”

She then led him to the table. On the front of the mansion there was a table by which Elsa was sitting. Appropriately for spring, a single white cloud floated in the blue skies.

“Jin-nii, welcome.”

“Hey Elsa.”

“Fine weather. It’s warm today. Jin-nii, aren’t you hot in all those clothes?”

Jin was still wearing his winter clothing. His underwear and shirt made out of a Ground Spider's silk protected against the cold in addition to breathing well.

That's why Jin didn't mix up his attire very much. However, apparently as Elsa was a girl she was a bit curious about it. Because it was no longer the season for winter clothing.

"It's so warm today so we decided to eat outside."

Mine spoke while carrying the food over and so that's where the talk about clothes ended.

There was a gentle warm breeze; it was certainly the perfect weather for having lunch outside.

While slowly eating, Jin recited the story he had heard from Reinhardt last night to Elsa.

"Stearina-san told Rai-nii a story like that?"

"Mh-hm."

"The unifilers are... Scary."

Elsa said and her shoulders trembled a little. Jin cheered her up, saying,

"It's fine, you'll be safe here. I'm with you too. Reinhardt also has bodyguards following him."

To calm down Elsa, he told her that he had decided to increase the SP's number of personnel so he could secretly protect some acquaintances. This made Elsa smile a little and nod.

"Mm, Jin-nii."

"Well, it's about time for me to go back. See you tomorrow."

"Mm, see you, tomorrow."

After returning to Hourai Island, Jin thought about the clothes Elsa spoke of. Then it suddenly occurred to him.

“Devil beast materials...That’s right!”

For example, let’s use the Death Serpent.

Its body is covered with scales and then with skin. The scales are solid, but the skin is tough too. But how tough?

Even though they’re devil beasts, as living beings they’ve got skin which is elastic. However, when Reiko struck them they made a sound as if she had struck a lump of metal. Why was this?

One part of it was that a devil beast’s outer skin has the property of becoming harder against impacts or pressure.

Against an impact like someone’s blow, in a moment it hardens to the same degree as metal. Even with the localized pressure of for example fangs, claws, or edged tools the same reaction occurs.

This was a self-defense reaction that utilized Magic Energy. Utilizing such a material’s special nature it can be made to stretch and contract by applying Magic Energy.

Automata and golems use this property in their Magical Muscles, and Reiko’s skin which was supple but didn’t tear even when smashing up boulders indeed had this property too.

First, Jin thought to use this material in his clothes.

The pants he was now wearing were made out of a magical beast’s leather. They were durable and flexible. However, they didn’t harden.

“The thinnest part of this Sea Dragon’s leather is...As I thought, the abdomen, huh.”

If you picture a Japanese dragon with a body two times fatter, that’s a Sea Dragon. Its surface area is also larger, and different parts of the skin have different properties.

The abdomen, including the lower abdomen, had a skin that was somewhat thin and the most elastic.

“It’s got to be a jumpsuit after all.”

He planned to make a jumpsuit out of the leather. He was able to use the Craft Magic [Fusion] together with some [Forming] on the leather, so it was ideal for the purpose.

However, its color was a purplish black. This would go with the Adamantite-coated silver grey helmet finished a short while ago. It was way too subdued.

“First, a prototype.”

As it was possible to use [Forming] it was fine to make it a little loose or a little tight, and so Jin went ahead with manufacturing.

The Sea Dragon’s leather that couldn’t be cut with simply scissors was readily cut through with a [Water Jet], he then used [Fusion] and in a few moments a suit of clothes was complete.

And then when he was about to put it on.

“Ah, there’s no zipper.”

Jin realized that there was no fasteners not to mention zippers.

“Oh well. I suppose I’ll finish it with the Craft Magic [Joint].”

Jin adopted the easiest measure considering this was just a prototype.

“Here we go. ...Ah, it’s too tight. [Forming]. ...Now it’s too large, huh. [Forming].”

While wearing the clothes he revised them multiple times, and at last Jin finished his personal leather jumpsuit.

“Hmm, now let’s diffuse Magic Energy into this. ...Owowowow!”

Apparently it was the wrong way to diffuse Magic Energy into it, as the clothes contracted around and pressed on Jin all at once. Even so, as he hadn’t used much Magic Energy it was not a big deal. If it had taken for example Reiko’s ordinary power output, all the bones in his body would’ve been broken.

“Father, are you alright!?”

Reiko who had been silently watching asked with worry in her voice.

“...Yeah, I’m fine. It was just a bit of a blunder.”

This time he poured in Magic Energy more carefully. The jumpsuit hardened.

“Reiko, use a little...Let’s see, use one percent power and directly... Wait no, get that over there... That’s right, take that branch and try hitting me with it.”

If Reiko hit him directly he had no idea how he’d end up, so Jin wanted to do the performance test as gently as possible at first.

In the end, he found out that it was well able to endure a blow from Reiko at ten percent power. However, the final result was that Jin had been magnificently sent flying and Reiko had rushed behind him to catch him with her super speed.

And then Jin was too frightened to test any more than that.

“Well, this is fine. Let’s use this as a base and add plenty of features.”

He had only thought to use it as the base for the armor, so Jin who judged that the hard part was now over with became more cheerful.

“It may be impossible to control the expanding and constricting well.”

Even for Jin this wasn’t a simple task. Making just the parts that corresponded to muscles constrict was a herculean task.

The unrelated parts also constricted, or the muscles constricted more than they were supposed to.

Reiko who was watching also looked thrilled.

Then finally he had an idea.

That was to affix additional Magical Muscles on top of the jumpsuit. Using them it would be easy to understand to where and how much Magic Energy he wanted to pour in.

“It’s got an awful appearance though.”

It was just like an anatomical model with muscles attached. If one saw this in some dark place one would faint.

However, about the performance. It could support Jin's movements and about double his strength. It seemed that any more and Jin's bones wouldn't be able to handle it.

Just the muscles were stronger, and having weak bones support them wouldn't let it display enough of its power.

"Nevertheless, well, the defensive power is first-class. If it lets me double my strength then I suppose it's a success. Although rather than a power suit this is 'reinforced clothing'."

For now, Jin was glad of his success.

"However, this appearance is a little..."

A muscled anatomical model was too spooky.

"Ah, that's right, why don't I just put another layer outside."

With the three-layered structure he somehow managed to make it look normal to the outside.



"The branch head of the eighth subdivision, Purcell, has come back fleeing."

"The branch head of the eighth subdivision...Oh, that ne'er-do-well? He's a fellow who got branch head status by using his wealth."

"Yes, and then after once getting Elsa Randol in his hands he let her get recaptured or something like that."

"Hmph, how incompetent. So, what about the person who took her back?"

"Yes, that appears to have been Jin Nidou."

"Huh."

"And in so doing, Jin Nidou gave us Unifilers the warning of 'do not get involved with us', and then appears to have completely destroyed the stronghold of the eighth subdivision with pillars of light."

"Pillars of light? What's that supposed to mean?"

“I do not know. Purcell’s explanation wasn’t to the point, you see.”

“Hmph, a ne’er-do-well is a ne’er-do-well no matter what, huh. Oh well. Send the report to the head of magic technologies. They’ll probably be able to expose the true nature of these, quote, pillars of light, unquote.”

“Yes sir.”

“Do not get involved with us’ you say? What prattle from the likes of a Magi Craftsman.”

“It is as you say.”

“Nevermind Jin Nidou, Reinhardt and that other lady have apparently made contact?”

“Yes, they appear to be in Dali.”

“Alright. Urgently have the two secured.”

“At once.”

CHAPTER 27

COMBAT-READY

“Next is master’s weaponry, right?”

Ann said, because the reinforced clothing was more or less complete.

“[Water Jet] and [Laser] are too powerful, and they range from long distance to medium distance usage. Please acquire some short distance weaponry.”

“I see what you’re getting at.”

Ann’s proposal was on point. But Jin didn’t know martial arts or anything like that.

“Which means that in the end I should be fine swinging around something like a staff...”

For now, Jin pictured himself wielding a staff. ...There was something wrong with it. Jin couldn’t picture it.

“How about a katana? Although they do say that it won’t cut unless you align the blade correctly, and Adamantite is heavy too.”

Double strength was barely not enough to wield a katana made out of Adamantite.

“Hmm... It has to be light, so that means that some materials are off the table, huh...”

After thinking it through that much what popped into his mind was a sword made out of light out of a certain famous movie franchise.

“That would probably work out, it seems.”

Jin formed a plan in his head.

“Imprison plasma and...Nope. As an anti-personnel weapon that would be way too brutal. With lightning-type magic...It’s the same.”

Jin kept puzzling over it.

“Hmm, and I thought it was such a good idea...”

"Master, before you continue that please first add a self-defense barrier to your equipment."

Ann gave her some timely help. However, it wasn't where she had thought she'd help, as she helped Jin reach a good idea.

"That's right! A barrier! I'll make a barrier's force field into a sword!"

Usually [Magic Barrier]s spread out into a sphere or into a disk, but Jin began to consider if it was possible to make it into the shape of a sword. Spheres, disks, and other geometrical shapes were simple but making it into the shape of a sword was next to impossible.

"Alright! I can do this! I can do this!"

However, with Jin's knowledge of magic and experience on Earth it became feasible.

"Won't it work out if I just expand the [Magic Barrier]'s poles to the shape of a sword?"

A [Magic Barrier] was a wall made out of Ether, so to speak. In theory its construction was easy. It was a combination of attracting and repelling Ether. Using the techniques in equilibrium, you could put up an invisible wall.

Here's some more details about the attracted Ether and the repelled Ether. They collide against each other and in the location where they're in equilibrium the Ether density in the air becomes tens of thousands of times higher. The Ether can then link together. This [Ether Mesh] is what a [Magic Barrier] is.

A [Magic Barrier]'s strength is half decided by the Ether concentration, and half by the strength of the links of the mesh. The size of the Mesh is made so that Ether can easily pass through it, so that one doesn't have to worry about the magician inside running out of Ether.

The poles where Ether is repelled or attracted to are generated by a magical ring for example, or the imaginary points in space a magician can create. By inscribing down the complex details the designated imaginary points can be created by Magic Energy only, so by using a ring or something like that as a Magi Tool the performance is good.

And so Jin was thinking about trying to make those ‘poles’ into the shape of a sword.

“Usually the emissions come out of a point, so it becomes a sphere.”

Basically an equidistant Ether Mesh forms around the emitting point.

“To change it into the shape of a sword, the intensity needs to be changed partially...Oh, that should do.”

By changing the intensity, the distance at which the repelling and attracting forces are at equilibrium changes. For poles that are a point that control would be too difficult, but for a sword shape it was comparatively simple. (Only for a Magi Craft Meister, that is.)

It seemed like some minute adjustments were still necessary, but the sword-shaped [Magic Barrier] that Jin held did look like a 50-centimeter sword and emitted a faint light.

“Alright, let’s do this like that, and that like this.”

Jin continued tweaking the Magi Formula for the sword-shaped [Magic Barrier].

After about three rounds of adjustments,

“I’ve done it!”

Jin raised his voice in delight.

“If I change the output then... Whoa!”

From the short 40 centimeters it lengthened to over two meters.

“Now then, the sharpness.”

Jin tried slashing at a block of wood that was lying around nearby.

“Huh?”

However, contrary to his expectations it wasn’t cut.

“Hmm, maybe it’s because right now it’s a simple cylindrical barrier...”

He guessed at the reason and developed it further.

"Let's change the nature of the linked Ether at this point to fire...No, to thermal energy."

After a small tweak he performed a second test.

"How's it now? ...Ow, that's hot!"

Hot air leaked out towards Jin.

"If I change a bit more to thermal energy the Ether won't be diminish."

And then the third try.

"Mh-hm, this is good!"

A bluish-white shining magic sword. Its temperature probably passed 10,000 degrees Celsius. When he cut the block of wood the cross-section was burned black and a part of it disappeared.

Next he decided to test it on a metal rod. For now he put on the helmet too and asked Reiko.

"Reiko, can you get that metal rod from there and gently swing it at me please. Listen, veeery gently."

"Yes."

After emphasizing it to Reiko, she took the two centimeters thick and about 80 centimeters long metal rod and swung it towards Jin. He blocked it with the magic sword.

As it was fundamentally a sword-shaped barrier, it was able to take it on like a real sword.

Then where he blocked the pole it melted down in less than a second and was completely severed in two. If he blocked a sword, the opponent's blade would probably get damaged.

"Alright, then how about electric energy?"

Fumbling with the Magi Language, he tried to make it produce electric energy using lightning-type magic.

"Now, how is it?"

He activated it. It looked bluish-white, but also was bizarrely yellow. That's the kind of sword it became.

"Let's see, touching this would be too perilous, huh... Reiko, please thrust that metal pole into the ground."

"Yes, Father."

Reiko lightly stabbed the 60-centimeter pole into the ground.

"Alright, let's go."

Aiming at the metal pole Jin swung downwards. The moment the sword was about to come into contact, an arc discharge occurred and there was a bang along with an instant of nothing but dazzling light.

Without the light-impeding feature of the helmet it seemed he would've damaged his eyes.

The next moment the sword and the pole made contact, and sparks as if from an electric welder came flying and the iron rod was bisected. Glowing white metal scattered around.

"To make it glow white with heat in an instant, the voltage must be hundreds of millions..."

Jin stared fixedly at the sword. He had a hunch he had accidentally made something ridiculous. If the electric energy hadn't been produced by magic, Jin who was the closest to it would've been the first one to come to harm.

"Next is to make sure this voltage can controlled, I guess."

Jin muttered, and after adjusting and refining the sword's size in addition to the heat and electric energy, he finally finished two Magi Tools that were magical swords.

"I guess I'll call them 'Masamune' and 'Murasama'."

Masamune was fire-style, and Murasama was the electric-style sword. And those names were once more made up on a whim.

“Master, good work.”

“Father, would you like a bath?”

Both Ann and Reiko called out to Jin who had finished working. Jin first stretched his limbs, then said,

“Yeah, I guess I’ll take a bath.”

He then headed to the mansion. Reiko followed him and Ann stayed to tidy up.

“Ahh, the fatigue just melts away.”

While submerged in the mansion’s hot spring, Jin spoke like an old man.



“I have arrived at Dali.”

“Alright, proceed as planned.”

“Yes sir.”



That night, Jin was waiting for Reinhardt to make contact, but when there was no contact after the expected time had passed, Jin began to get worried.

Then he received an urgent report from Laozi.

“My Lord, a report from Sage. It appears that Reinhardt-dono has been kidnapped.”

“What the!?”

He had just increased the SP’s numbers as he was afraid of that.

“She went via the base at the ruins of the stronghold to Dali where Reinhardt-dono was, but it seems she barely didn’t make it in time.”

“Those Unifilers... So they didn’t heed my warning.”

Jin’s anger silently flared up.

“Hourai Island, prepare to sortie.”

CHAPTER 28

DEFEAT

That day, Reinhardt went to visit Stearina's house in the morning.

It was to discuss things regarding the control of golems. For that reason he brought his own work, Schwarz Ritter, with him.

As he had also been cautioned by Jin, he had five guards deployed in the surroundings of the house. Originally the guards had been soldiers dispatched from Shouro Empire.

"Welcome, Reinhardt-kun."

Since last night Stearina had got to calling Reinhardt with '-kun'.

"Hey, good morning Stearina."

Even Reinhardt addressed her without an honorific.

They proceeded inside, and he was led to a spacious living room. There stood two golems and two Automata Stearina had made.

"Right now, this is my masterpiece."

"Hmm, it's wonderful."

One of them was the same type as the crystal golem 'Ceres' that had been previously destroyed during the golem party, and the other was a steel male-type golem.

The Automata were in the form of a girl in her late teens and an adult woman.

"The golems are 'Eris' and 'Caster'. The Automata are 'Sylene' and 'Mylene'

After quick introductions the two got into their discussion. They both had true artisan's spirits.

"About that crystal golem, from what I can tell, it moves using the [Forming] magic, right? Isn't the Magic Energy efficiency extremely bad?"

Reinhardt asked, and Stearina answered.

"That's right. However, simultaneously with [Forming] the mobile parts have [Softening] applied to them to weaken them."

"Hmm, I see. I suppose it's then about 30 percent more efficient than using only [Forming]?"

"That's exactly right. In practice it's around 25 percent. Long periods of operation are impossible, you see. Although, a crystal golem's purpose isn't in its practical use."

Reinhardt also could agree with that.

"That's right. Seeing Ceres for the first time was startling. You took it to a direction someone like me would never think about."

"Oh my, thank you. ...So, how about Caster?"

Of course, this was about the male-type golem.

"Hmm, it's the same male-type but, maybe because it was made by a female Magi Craftsman, it's got a certain style."

It indeed was a man with delicate features, or something like that. Maybe it could be likened to a male character drawn by a shoujo manga artist.

After Reinhardt told her that, Stearina let out a little laugh and said,

"I'm not much into rough men, you see."

Reinhardt ignored that.

"As for the structure of the golem's main parts, what did you use?"

"I used Soft Magi Resin."

Soft Magi Resin was a typical material for a golem's main parts. It was resin taken from a tree that contained Magic Energy, a 'Magi Pine'.

In short, you could think of it as pine resin that contained Magic Energy. If Magic

Energy was important you could mix in powdered Mithril, if weight was you could mix in lead. It was popular to change the additive depending on its use.

For battle-type golems, jewels tinged with Magic Energy of Magi Stone quality at the very least were used. The golems that Jin once beat that became the bases for Gon and Gen had been golems like this.

Golems like Jin's with a skeleton and muscles were rare.

"How about the additive? My Schwarz Ritter uses finely powdered Mithril and Adamantite."

Reinhardt disclosed a small secret regarding his own Schwarz Ritter.

"Oh, finely powdered Adamantite you say? What kind of an effectiveness does that have?"

"One is weight. Adamantite is heavier than lead, you see. The other is...Want to guess?"

Reinhardt said with a mischievous smile.

"Hmm, let's see...I don't know. Adamantite dampens Magic Energy, while Mithril lets it diffuse. They seem to counter each other."

Stearina said, and Reinhardt gave her a hint.

"Almost but not quite there. I never said that I *mixed* them."

After that hint Stearina apparently got it. She was indeed a top-class Magi Craftsman.

"I've got it! Some parts have Mithril in them and some parts have Adamantite, right?"

"That's correct. The arms and legs have Mithril. The torso has Adamantite. The fingers and the feet from ankles to toes have Adamantite in them. Different things for different purposes, no?"

Stearina gazed at Reinhardt with a look of admiration on her face.

"You're amazing indeed. Well, in that case I'll..."

Stearina was about to say something when there was a loud noise.

"What's that?"

"It came from the entry hall?"

Reinhardt and Stearina stood up nearly simultaneously and went to the hallway.

"!!"

There stood four golems, all over two meters tall and colored a dull silver. They recognized the design of the armor and the helmets.

"It can't be, the Unifilers!?"

"Why are they here!? What happened to the defense golems on the streets of Dali?"

"What happened to my guards?"

"We'll-take-any number-of-weak-golems-like-those-on. Moreover-human-guards-are-nothing."

One of the golems talked. The metallic voice was difficult to understand.

"I can't believe it, you mean you simply openly strolled through the town!?"

"No, they must've used the waterway behind the house."

Reinhardt was reminded of the layout of the house's location. The waterway at the back of the building connected to river Azul. Most likely they had used a regular boat to slip into Dali.

"Schwarz Ritter!"

Reinhardt called for Schwarz Ritter whom he had brought with him.

"Caster!"

Stearina called for Caster.

"Resistance-is-useless."

With that, one of them faced Schwarz Ritter and the other faced Caster. The remaining two then moved towards Reinhardt and Stearina.

"Shit! [Barrier]!"

Reinhardt activated the Ring of Protection he had received from Jin. The golem that came for Reinhardt was stopped about 30 centimeters before him.

Schwarz Ritter and Caster clashed with the enemy golems.

Schwarz Ritter swung his fist and knocked the enemy golem down.

“Oh-it’s-stronger-than-earlier-huh.”

The golem that appeared to be the spokesman voiced their opinion. Hearing that, Reinhardt understood that information about him had leaked to Unifilers.

“Schwarz Ritter! Use your full force! Tear them down!”

“Ja.”

Schwarz Ritter used his full power. His fist had enough strength to blow off the opposing golem’s head. Schwarz Ritter then moved to fight a second golem.

He fought with the autonomic-type golem. The home’s walls were pierced with holes and pillars were broken. But there was no leeway to care about things like that.

“Eeeeek!”

Stearina’s scream was heard. Reinhardt turned to look behind him, and saw that Caster had been destroyed and Stearina had been caught by the enemy golem.

“Stearina!”

Reinhardt bit his lip. He should’ve pulled her next to him and included her in the barrier, he thought.

“First-one-caught.”

The spokesmanlike golem spoke.

“Reinhardt-dono-won’t-you-surrender?”

“.....”

Reinhardt didn’t reply, and the golem once more began to speak.

“Hmm-how-about-destroying-your-hope-that-Schwarz-Ritter-won’t-lose.”

By now, Schwarz Ritter had defeated a second golem.

Only the golem that was holding Stearina and the golem in front of Reinhardt remained.

“If-that’s-how-you-want-it-then-let-us-show-our-real-power.”

The golem in front of him said and headed towards Schwarz Ritter.

This was the best chance Reinhardt could ask for, as if Stearina was taken hostage he couldn’t have resisted, but maybe because the leaderlike enemy golem was a bit simple, it apparently wanted to fight with Schwarz Ritter.

Since last time, Reinhardt had also improved Schwarz Ritter’s power. Even though it wasn’t a match for Jin’s Reiko, he thought it wouldn’t lose to the Unifilers’ golems.

“Schwarz Ritter, go!”

“Ja.”

With a short reply, Schwarz Ritter grappled with the enemy golem. For a moment the two fought for supremacy in strength and their movements stopped.

“I-see-so-this-is-Schwarz-Ritter’s-strength.”

The two kept struggling but currently neither seemed to be on top.

“That-is-enough. Full-power-on.”

The enemy golem said, and suddenly its strength increased. Schwarz Ritter was outpushed. While still being grappled he was thrown against a wall, went straight through it, hit a pillar and then stopped.

But the enemy golem didn’t stop. It completely tore off Schwarz Ritter’s right arm with its suddenly raised strength. And in the next moment the left one.

“Wh-what!?”

The look on Reinhardt’s face said that he couldn’t believe his eyes. But this was reality, and the enemy golem kicked Schwarz Ritter down, then plucked both of its legs off.

Its strength was monumental. It was as if it was...

“As powerful as Reiko-chan?”

The dumbfounded Reinhardt spoke unintentionally.

“Reiko? Is-that-the-name-of-the-strongest-golem?”

After having his limbs torn off, Schwarz Ritter was left there and the enemy golem once more came close to Reinhardt.

“Uh...”

Realizing he had accidentally revealed information, Reinhardt shut his mouth.

“Oh-well. You-can-tell-us-all-about-it-later.”

The enemy golem said and, and the one who had Stearina as hostage approached Reinhardt.

“Won’t-you-cancel-that-barrier?”

“Reinhardt-sama! You can’t!”

Stearina firmly said, but the next moment her arm was wrangled and she let out a scream.

Reinhardt couldn’t just calmly watch that happen to her.

He cancelled the barrier. Then maybe because the enemy golem knew that it was the effect of the ring, it twisted and raised Reinhardt’s arm, then pulled out the Ring of Protection from his finger.

At the same time, chokers were attached to the pair’s necks. They were identical to the one that had been attached to Elsa. Magi Tools that prevented chanting and harmed the body.

“Before-long-people-will-gather-here.”

Because of the loud noises surely curious onlookers and guard soldiers would come. The golem said that and then took the two out through the hole that had been opened in the wall.

Right there floating on top of the waterway was a large black boat.

“Get-on.”

And that's how Reinhardt and Stearina got kidnapped in broad daylight.

There were plenty of eyewitnesses, but everyone was at their wits' end and could only watch as the black boat entered the river Azul and continued downstream.

Sage and Cosmos who were the SP dedicated for Reinhardt arrived half a day after that.

The two found the destroyed Schwarz Ritter and five bodies covered with a cloth.

CHAPTER 29

HOURAI ISLAND'S TROOPS, MOBILIZED

While Jin was lamenting his naivete, the troops were preparing to sortie.

And after worrying about it, he told Elsa on Kunlun Island that Reinhardt had been kidnapped. As he thought this development would result in him not having lunch with Elsa tomorrow.

And in doing Elsa wouldn't be able to be in contact with Jin, so as not to unnecessarily worry her he decided to explain the situation at once.

"Unifilers...Even Rai-nii..."

Elsa's voice sank.

"Jin-nii, save Rai-nii."

"Yeah, I'll save him. Well then, I'll be going."

Jin cut the call and continued the preparations.

The VTOLs from Falcon-1 to Falcon-3 were possible to dispatch so he had them included. The Air Force golems from Sky-11 to Sky-13 would be in charge of the piloting.

"Let's see, looking at this now the means of travel are still lacking, huh."

Jin felt that the means of travelling to the exact location where things were happening were lacking.

"I guess supersonic aircraft is needed...No, something more than that."

What came to his mind was Warp Gate malfunctions. Without one on the receiving side the warp location would be unknown, but supposing that it could be controlled...

When the perparations to sortie were in order, Jin boarded Falcon-1 and left Hourai Island.

Along with him on Falcon-1 was Reiko, and the 10 SP members following Jin. Reiko

had also diligently brought the railgun with her. Furthermore a small Warp Gate was loaded on board.

On Falcon-2 were the Army golems from Land-41 to Land-60.

Finally on board the Falcon-3, just in case, was the Navy golem Marine-5 along with the boat Hydro-5 which had been suspended. Ann had suggested this to have the possibility of using it on the large river Azul.

Falcon-3 flew in the night sky at its maximum speed. About 600 kilometers per hour. It was an astounding speed for its large fairframe.

"If I had an aircraft carrier ready and had deployed it to the western seas, getting all the way there would be fast with a Warp gate."

Mid-transit, while Jin was worried about Reinhardt there was nothing he could do about it so he thought about parts where he was lacking and of ways on how to improve them.

"Right, Reiko."

"Yes, Father?"

"I want to ask you. Do you think a Warp Gate's malfunctioning could be controlled?"

Jin asked Reiko who had gone around the world with Warp Gate malfunctions multiple times to search for Jin. He was trying to get some hints from Reiko's experience.

"While they were malfunctioning there didn't seem to be any directionality to them. Neither could I sense anything in common with the locations to which I was warped."

"Is that so..."

Jin was a little disappointed.

"But, there was one interesting phenomenon."

"What was it?"

"Yes, there appeared to have been a connection between the Magic Energy consumption of the Warp Gate and the end point's distance from the research

laboratory."

In other words, according to the impression Reiko got it seemed that when it consumed a lot of Magic Energy the warp distance was long.

"There had been no way to measure it until now, but the current measurements point to that. In other words, the northern mountain of Kaina Village, the forest on Blue Land's outskirts, and Port Rock all are nearly the same distance away."

That was good news. If the Magic Energy consumption could be controlled, only thing left was the direction.

Warp Gates were Magi Tools that connected two points in space.

During a warp, the receiving side merely marks where to go, and the propelling side could be said to do almost all of the work. Jin too understood that much.

"So that means that if only the receiving side could be marked without equipment..."

During the one hour and a bit journey to Dali, Jin devoted himself to thinking about this.

"Father, we're soon above Dali."

"Ah, is that so.

Jin stopped speculating and returned to reality. Here too it was night. Jin could see nothing with his eyes.

"Falcon-1, cancel stealth. Reiko, please look down. Do you see anything conspicuous?"

Reiko received the order from Jin to look for suspicious objects with her eyesight. He himself also put on the reinforced clothes and the helmet.

"Nothing in particular at the moment."

Unfortunately however, nothing was found.

"Shit, so we really are too late."

Jin thought of ways to find Reinhardt.

If he knew Reinhardt's Magic Energy Pattern he could search for him with the detector on Hourai Island, but right now he didn't have something like that on hand.

"There's no Magic Energy left in the Guild card case either, huh."

Then he suddenly had an idea and got in touch with the SP units Sage and Cosmos who were supposed to be in Dali.

"Yes, Chief. Sage speaking."

"Alright, listen, in order to search for Reinhardt, isn't there anything that has Reinhardt's Magic Energy pattern in it left behind?"

Jin asked and the reply came immediately.

"Yes, there's the destroyed Schwarz Ritter."

"What!?"

Jin was surprised. According to the report he was lying around with his limbs torn off.

"So the opponent is able to destroy Schwarz Ritter that badly."

There was a remarkable difference in power compared to the enemy golems he had faced until now.

"Oh well. Anyway, can you carry Schwarz Ritter here?"

"Yes. If the two of us overlap our Stealth fields I think carrying it will work out fine."

"Alright, then please hurry. Rendezvous in..."

They met with Sage and Cosmos ten kilometers away from Dali, upstream along the river Azul. Of course, stealth was operational at the time of the landing.

This area across the river was visible from the Celuroa Kingdom's ramparts so there were no villages. Jin wanted to ask if this was a defense plan or what.

Ten minutes after Falcon-1 landed Sage and Cosmos came. They were indeed fast.

"Good work, Sage, Cosmos."

“Chief, apologies for being unable to protect Reinhardt-sama.”

The moment they arrived the two apologized, but Jin just told them not to worry about it.

“More importantly. Schwarz Ritter, he’s really done in, huh...”

Because the limbs had been torn off forcibly, there had been Magic Energy leakage and he had ceased operating.

“However, that’s unrelated to the Control Core.”

Jin muttered while taking out the Control Core from Schwarz Ritter’s chest.

“Alright, this should be enough to recognize Reinhardt’s Magic Energy pattern. Sage, take Falcon-1’s Warp gate to Hourai Island, and hand this Control Core to Laozi. Then have him look for Reinhardt’s whereabouts. There hasn’t been long so there’s no way he’s that far away from Dali.”

“Understood.”

Sage took the Control Core and passed through the Warp Gate to Hourai Island.

Jin simply waited contact from Laozi. While waiting he thought.

“I should install Magic Energy detectors on the Falcons and Raptors too, huh.”

Then he realized something.

“Oh, right. To raise the position calculation’s accuracy I should install them not only on Hourai Island, but on Kunlun Island and the aircraft carrier I’ll complete afterwards.”

If location was far away from the measuring instruments, adding another set of measuring instruments would increase the precision as if the target was closer. This would also be effective when loaded on the Falcons which could come to a stop midair.

While thinking about that Laozi’s contact came.

“That’s fast. So, did you find him?”

“Yes, My Lord. Reinhardt-dono’s Magic Energy is great so identifying him was simple.”

At the same time Laozi being familiar with this must've speeded up the process.

"So, the location?"

"Yes. Ten kilometers north from the location My Lord currently resides in, just by the river."

"Got it. Good work."

Nearly at the same time as he hung up Sage came back. She was holding a simple map.

"Chief, I've brought a rough map from Laozi."

"Sage, good work. Alright, Falcon-2 and 3, land!"

While stealthed the two planes descended. Unlike jet engines, Magi Jet Engines didn't make a sound. They kicked up some dust, but that area had a lot of gravel so it wasn't a problem in particular..

Even if someone noticed, as the landing would be brief by the time a patrol came around they'd probably have already taken off.

"Units from Land-41 to Land-60 go on land. Sage and Cosmos too. Lower down Hydro-5. Me, Reiko, and Marine-5 will go there by boat. Falcons from one to three will provide protection from above."

"Understood."

It was a land, sea, and air encirclement tactic. The preparations were completed in three minutes. Jin and Reiko boarded Hydro-5 while Falcons from one to three took off to the skies.

"Alright, sally out!"

At Jin's command the Land units broke into a run. Once they had neared the enemy base Sage and Cosmos would handle the stealth equipment so that they could spread out for the encirclement.

Jin continued upstream in Hydro-5 piloted by Marine-5. He no longer cared about being seen.

"This time, I'll make those damned Unifilers regret it."

The self-identified eighth subdivision's branch head Purcell didn't have any important information. Apparently he had in truth occupied a lower position. A small fry who had gained status in the Unifilers using money.

They weren't stupid enough to share important secrets with some upstart newcomer like him.

Jin was worked up and thought that this time for sure he would extract major information.

Hydro-5 continued on the river at a speed of 50 kilometers per hour, or at nearly 27 knots.

Meanwhile, the Army golems also dashed at nearly the same speed.

After traveling on foot the distance of ten kilometers in a little over ten minutes, the base they had headed towards was right in front of their eyes.

It was one of Celuroa Kingdom's abandoned lookout forts.

CHAPTER 30

THE SIXTH SUBDIVISION

The black boat that had run away with Reinhardt and Stearina entered the river Azul.

The large river Azul was a river that flowed from lake Azul. Lake Azul was not only a tourist attraction but also an important location that could ensure the resources of the fishing industry that was important to Celuroa Kingdom.

Here the width of the river was about 300 meters. Midway the river Azul floated four ships around 40 meters in length. They were ships owned by Celuroa Kingdom for the purpose of carrying carriages across the river, in other words they were ferryboats.

The black boat approached one of the ships. It was already four o'clock. There were many barriers for entry to the river Azul, so in order to pass through without notice they employed some trickery and had to use the waterways to enter river Azul. As a result it had taken time.

As the sun was already setting, there was no one who saw the black boat. The sun was already in an angle where the boat couldn't be seen from the coast.

Earlier the distance had been around 150 meters and it had already begun to get darker, so for the naked eye it was probably impossible to tell that something was going on.

The small black boat came alongside the large ship, then Reinhardt and Stearina were moved on it. By now their arms had been tied behind their backs.

“What? We’re switching to a larger ship?”

Reinhardt said and,

“Take-care-not-to-cause-unnecessary-noise.”

The golem warned Reinhardt.

The large ship the two were made to board went upstream. There was no response from the remaining three ships.

After seeing that Reinhardt thought of a question.

“There’s no way all the three ships are supporting the Unifilers. Even so...?”

Maybe because it noticed that Reinhardt was observing his surroundings,

“If-someone-as-wise-as-you-sees-then-it-will-bring-trouble-in-the-future.”

The golem said and covered Reinhardt’s and Stearina’s eyes with a blindfold.

The large ship continued on at a slow pace. The town of Dali grew further away, and the human settlements on both banks of the river became fewer. The curtain of the night fell and the surroundings were wrapped in the darkness.

After continuing on for two hours, the large ship neared the right bank. There were the ruins of an old fort. It seemed like a lookout fort from the era when Celuroa Kingdom had used its might to expand.

It appeared to no longer be in use and was covered in ivy.

Half of the fairly gigantic fort was built as if it was leaning on the river. Even though it was called a lookout fort, it must’ve been used as an important stronghold during wars.

It had been designed so that boats could sail into it straight from the river, and the large ship disappeared into the passage that was like a dark opened mouth.

Reinhardt who was still blindfolded couldn’t confirm it but he guessed from the atmosphere that the ship had come alongside a quay.

“I wonder if we’ve arrived at our destination?”

He said, and apparently the spokesmanlike golem had stayed next to him as it spoke.

“We-get-off-now.”

It pulled Reinhardt up by the arm like a human.

“Ow! Be more gentle!”

Stearina’s voice was heard. Apparently she had been pulled up too.

While blindfolded, Reinhardt climbed up some stairs, walked through a hallway, turned corners multiple times and once more climbed some stairs.

Before long Reinhardt could feel the sensation of a carpet under the soles of his feet, and he was made to sit on a chair. At the same time his blindfold was taken off.

“Welcome, Reinhardt-dono, Stearina-dono. I’m delighted to meet you.”

A man sat on a chair in front of them and greeted them.

“I am the branch head of the sixth division of the Unifilers, Intact Mazecilia d’Galvani. I’m also a viscount of Celuroa Kingdom.”

Intact who introduced himself was a man in his mid-30s or so, and approximately of the same height as Reinhardt. However, he was slim enough to call nothing but skin and bones. He had dark brown hair and ashen eyes. He had a crooked Roman nose and sunken cheeks. Those eyes of his were filled to brim with cruelty, and one could even feel his madness. He wore a white robe and a cloak.

The room they were in was stone-built and spacious, the floor had a carpet laid out on it and tapestry had been hung on the walls. Countless Magi Lamps were turned on and it was bright as day.

“It is an honour to welcome the superior Magi Craftsmen Reinhardt-dono and Stearina-dono to this subdivision of mine.”

“Hmph, so you’re the same kind of guy as that Purcell or whatever his name was.”

Reinhardt said as if spitting it out. Intact then frowned.

“Purcell? I’d like you to not bunch me together with such an incompetent fellow. You see, I am the only one of the branch heads who have been bestowed with a few of the newest all-purpose golems.

“All-purpose golems?”

“That’s right. Stronger than your Schwarz Ritter, and capable of autonomic action on top of that. You must know their power from experience, right?”

“Well, you might say that.”

Reinhardt tentatively affirmed it.

"And then, I have long been thinking about sounding out Stearina-sama but, regrettably, it turned out to become a heavy-handed operation like this."

"Hmph, no matter what I won't cooperate with you."

Stearina firmly declared, but her voice was a little shaky.

"Ha ha, bluffing is pointless. You see, we have our methods to make you cooperate regardless of your intent."

"Are you talking about [Hypno]?"

Reinhardt blurted out without thinking.

"Hmm? Who told you that?"

Intact gave a grim stare at Reinhardt.

"I wonder. I must've forgotten."

"Hmph, playing dumb is also pointless. You see, once you're under the effects of [Hypno] you'll confess to everything."

Being told that Reinhardt bit his lip.

"Well, think carefully. If you cooperate, your magical craftsmanship will surely improve remarkably. If you want to know why, we have the world's most foremost genius Magi Craftsman with us."

"Ah, is that so."

Someone called the best in the world didn't much convince Reinhardt who knew Jin.

"Hmph, so you don't believe me. But you must've seen the power of those all-purpose golems. You see, during the golem party that was held in Egelia Kingdom, we caused and utilized the riot that time to examine the golems of each country. The gist of it is that the all-purpose golems were made using that collected information as the basis."

"So the riot that time really was just a diversion in order to gather information, huh."

"That's right. And then there was apparently a golem that also surpassed that 'Tauros', right? 'Reiko', you said? We measured its strength and made sure to have the all-purpose golems able to exhibit strength surpassing its."

Intact spoke with pride. The madness in his eyes increased further.

"In addition, I've also been awarded a single combat golem specialized in battles. It can boast a strength nearly double that of the all-purpose golems. It truly is a golem worthy of being called invincible."

Reinhardt of course didn't fully comprehend Reiko's strength. However, the other day he was shown Jin's technology on Hourai Island. Just by knowing that, he could tell that what the man in front of him was saying was false.

"Well, I don't think the word invincible is something to be used so easily."

Reinhardt said full of cynicism, and Intact treated his reply as if it was based on what happened to Schwarz Ritter,

"Well, I thought you would say that."

He said and laughed it off.

"Anyways, Reinhardt-dono, Stearina-dono, now that you are here help is not coming. And even if it did come, without a force surpassing an army of a thousand men it wouldn't be enough. Think well on how you'll reply to my request."

Intact said and nodded towards four black-masked men, who then forcibly made Reinhardt and Stearina stand and took them out of the room.

"Where do you plan on taking us?"

Reinhardt said and,

"To the guest room."

One of the men replied, they again climbed down some stairs and eventually the two were locked into a room. There were no windows, only two simple beds. A single Magi Lamp was left to light the room, making it dim.

"Sigh."

Having the restraints keeping his arms behind his back untied, Reinhardt breathed a sigh of relief. Stearina hung her head down. They both looked somehow listless.

"Stearina, cheer up!""

Reinhardt said, but she did not budge. Somehow or other her body's sluggishness was the cause of her being dispirited.

"...It's useless. No matter how I refuse them, I'll end up the same as that Dominique."

Reinhardt had told her the other day that Dominique had been brainwashed, or more precisely was apparently under the effects of [Hypno], and remembering Dominique's disgraceful behavior Stearina shuddered.

"I don't want that! I don't want to not be myself any more!"

Saying it herself shocked her even more, and she gradually seemed to become more panicked.

"It's alright, I'm with you."

Reinhardt concealed the fact that his body was getting dull too, gently hugged Stearina and lightly patted her on the back. Doing so seemed to make Stearina return to normal from her agitation.

"Sorry, Reinhardt-kun."

When she separated from Reinhardt, Stearina's face blushed a little. Just after that she flopped onto the bed.

"So, the question is what to do now."

Laying his heavy body on the bed, Reinhardt pondered.

The ManaCom used to make contact was in the inn in Dali. The Ring of Protection had been taken.

They had been abducted in the afternoon. Arriving here took five or six hours. And then other things took approximately an hour more.

It was about time for Jin to realize that strangely he hadn't made contact with Jin at the usual time. If Jin used that same device that was used to find Elsa for finding him, help would probably arrive at tomorrow morning.

Reinhardt thought that, and planned to somehow persist until tomorrow morning.

However, his logic had great flaws.

First, he hadn't realized that Jin didn't know Reinhardt's Magic Energy pattern.

And the second.

"Reinhardt-sama, I presume?"

It was the true strength of Hourai Island and Jin when he was serious.

CHAPTER 31

PENETRATING

The abandoned lookout fort. It was apparent that it had become a base for the Unifilers.

"Alright, Land-41 to Land-60, maintain your distance while surrounding the fort, blockade them in."

Because the Army golems did not have a stealth function installed they stayed back at a distance of about 200 meters so as not to alert the enemy.

"All members of the SP, go for the enemy base."

The SP who successfully rescued Elsa last time were to once again sneak in and rescue Reinhardt.

"Falcon-1 to Falcon-3 stay on alert in the skies and provide backup."

Marine-5 steered the high-speed boat Hydro-5 on which Reiko was waiting for orders with Jin.

The twelve members of the SP snuck into the enemy base without so much as a whisper. Even Jin couldn't see them anymore.

They had already become adept at infiltrating with the earlier eighth subdivision base, so their actions were smooth. Even their coordination had become more advanced.

As a basis, the golems worked in pairs.

While one of them attracted the opponent's attention the other would stun them.

Against people who were alone they would attack from front and the back.

If there were multiple opponents they would also face them with two or more pairs.

And like that, without even raising an alarm they continued neutralizing the enemy.

The lookouts. The perimeter guards. Gatekeepers. Indoors patrols.

One after another they were neutralized.

The bases' structure was similar. Judging from the ages, the eighth subdivision base was a copy of this one. Because of this they were able to move even better.

"First floor side entrance captured."

"Starting the investigation of the second floor"

"Finished checking the first basement floor"

Under Jin's supervision the reports came in one after another. Then there was finally the long-awaited report.

"Second basement floor checked. Reinhardt-sama found."



Reinhardt, I presume, the pitch-black golem had asked. Its height was that of an average adult female.

It had pried open the door that was supposed to have been locked and had come in.

"Y-yeah. I'm Reinhardt."

Then the black female-type golem bowed and,

"Pleased to meet you. My name is Sage. I hope you are well."

She said.

Reinhardt didn't understand what was going on. Then another golem of the same female type appeared and,

"Sage, let's hurry."

She said.

"Y-you two are?"

Reinhardt barely managed to say just that.

“We are of the SP. We were appointed to be Reinhardt-sama’s bodyguards. My name is Cosmos.”

The golem who had come in later said.

“Appointed? In that case then...”

“Yes, appointed by Father Jin.”

After that reply Reinhardt breathed a sigh of relief.

“Is that so, it seems that Jin was faster than I thought. Got it, are we leaving now?”

“Yes. It’s sure to be safe for the next few moments.”

“Okay. Stearina, let’s go.”

“Uh-huh.”

Cosmos then asked.

“And she is?”

“Oh, she’s a Magi Craftsman who was abducted together with me, Stearina. I’d like you to also lead her out with us.”

“Understood.Let us go.”

There was a slight pause. It was because she had contacted Jin, but Reinhardt felt that she was hesitating and made a light apology.

“Sorry, I’m being selfish.”

“No, it’s no problem. However, having just the two of us would be unreliable so I’ve called for Pansy and Viola who are nearby.”

Before she had finished, two small figures had appeared. The golems had the same physique as Reiko.

“S-so you two are from the SP too?”

Reinhardt was surprised. Stearina looked speechless.

“Please make haste.”

They went from the second basement floor to the first basement floor. There they met with two more golems, the boy-types Pothos and Heath. Reinhardt appeared to have had something on his mind after seeing their figures.

Then to the first floor. There were three defeated guards who had been doing indoor patrols. Then a single golem appeared there.

“Leave it to me.”

Pothos said and leaped upon it. A moment later Heath also wordlessly swooped down on it.

For an instant, purple sparks scattered. It was 10,000,000-volt lightning magic. The golem was neutralized and collapsed. It made a high-pitched noise.

“They’ve realized something’s going on as we thought, huh. Let us hurry. Reinhardt-sama, Stearina-sama, please excuse us.”

“Eh?”

“Eh? Wha-what? ...Eeeeeeeeek!”

Reinhardt only spoke out in confusion, but Stearina reflexively screamed.

This was because Sage held Reinhardt while Cosmos held Stearina in her arms and started running.

Their running speed was over five times that of a human’s. It was no wonder Stearina screamed. It was like all of a sudden being on a rollercoaster.

But, that speed certainly kept the two away from danger. In one go they moved away from the old fort.

Stearina appeared to have suddenly gone quiet but it turned out she had fainted. It wasn’t a problem in particular so the two golems moved according to Jin’s orders and moved to a good distance away from the old fort.

There the golems Land-58, 59 and 60 were to guard the two even better.

“You guys are Jin’s too?”

“Yes, we are the Army golems Land-58, 59, and 60.”

Land-58 replied as their representative.

Reinhardt recalled and recognized them as the golems he had once seen on Kunlun Island. And then he re-experienced feeling Jin’s outrageousness.

“There’s no way for me to ask something like ‘please work for my country’ now, is there...”



“Father, the rescue of Reinhardt-san and Stearina-san appears to have been a success.”

“Alright, then it’s finally time to attack that fort. This time let’s avoid using the Falcons as much as we can.”

There was no need to show his whole hand, so to speak.

“Jin ordered Marine-5 to move Hydro-5 near the riverbank, and then he got on land together with Reiko.”

Because Jin was now wearing reinforced armor, it was possible for him to jump to a height of two meters. He could leap to land without the boat beaching.

Jin was wearing the helmet, and by activating the night vision mode of the shield visor he was able to see in the night as though it was midday.

Jin, Reiko, Land-50, and Land-51, together with Ash and Elm of the SP moved around from the riverside to the opposite side of the fort, to a place a hundred meters away from the fort’s front.

“Alright, as they didn’t heed my warning there’s no need to go easy on them. Reiko, give them our greetings starting with three shots, fire into the fort’s front wall.”

“Yes, Father”

Reiko raised the railgun merrily and prepared to fire. Seeing her figure with the one-and-a-half meter Adamantite gun barrel at the ready was extremely surreal.

“Alright, shoot!”

“Firing!”

She shot out at Mach 20 the Adamantite-coated bullets which prioritized penetrating force.

Bang, there was a shocking sound and nearly simultaneously a hole three centimeters in diameter appeared in the fort’s parapet in front of them.

The bullet easily pierced the one-meter thick stone wall, kept going to and through the inner wall, and finally came to a stop at the outer wall on the opposite side.

Then another shot. And after that, another.

After having three holes punched in it, Jin tried imagining what kind of a situation was going on inside the fort.

CHAPTER 32

BATTLE START

“W-what!!”

By now the sixth subdivision was in a state of confusion.

The time was past nine in the evening. In a sense, it was the most relaxed time. It was the time when people on the night shift started, and the people on day shift went to rest.

Disorder filled the fort’s night.

“The guards at the side entrance were discovered unconscious.”

“The personnel on the perimeter haven’t returned.”

“The two underground guards have been confirmed to have fainted.”

The reports kept coming in one after another, but it was simply incomprehensible.

“Gaah, just what is going on! Make your reports more clearly!”

The head of the sixth subdivision, Intact Mazecilia d’Galvani yelled loudly, but despite that the situation didn’t change for the better.

“I-it’s a disaster!”

“What is it this time?”

“The p-prisoners are gone!”

“What? What are you on about?”

Without understanding what was going on at all, Intact began getting affected by the disorder.

“Branch head, please calm down. No matter how you think about it, there’s no other conclusion than that someone infiltrated us from the outside.”

The one who called out was the vice branch head Marcello. He was also a Magi Craftsman.

“Someone, you say? Who was this someone!”

Intact asked, but Marcello replied incomprehensibly.

“Yesterday, a pigeon came from the headquarters, right? Try to remember, please.”

“What? Don’t tell me you took the tale of that upstart Purcell seriously?”

“I told you, if you think about it there’s only one possibility.”

It was extremely close to the truth but Intact turned a deaf ear to him. As a last resort, Marcello was about to give his own orders when something happened.

There was a shock as if something had hit his face, and while he thought he saw something pass by his eyes simultaneously there was a dull sound and a hole appeared in the wall.

“Wha-what? What was that just now?”

He touched his face and it was bleeding.

And in the next moment, a hole appeared in the wall behind him accompanied with a dull sound.

He had no inkling of what was going on. Marcello was also an excellent Magi Craftsman in his own way, but having no knowledge of this phenomenon he was not able to make any guesses.

In the neighboring room a guard soldier began to panic as suddenly there was a hole in the wall, and something had brushed against his arm completely tearing off a piece of flesh from it.

Despite this, Marcello was able to think clearly.

“There was something written...That’s right, ‘there was a Magi Craftsman who told us to not get involved with him’, it said. Don’t tell me...”

“Branch head! A hole suddenly appeared in the wall, and two golems which were on standby were demolished!”

“Something got stuck in the wall facing the river!”

The reports came in.

“Go get that thing stuck in the wall, then bring it to me.”

He gave the order, turned towards the front of the fort, and looked outside through a small hole meant for observation.

“Hm? What’s that?”

There were several figures standing about a hundred meters away. They were far away and it was dark so he couldn’t make out their facial features.

“Judging from the direction of the holes those guys are behind this?”

After thinking about it a bit, he decided to bring out two combat golems. Of course, they were golems of the lowest grade just to wait and see what would happen.

“Go. If they’re the enemy then catch them and bring them here.”



“Now then, there ought to have been some sort of a reaction by now, but.”

Ten minutes after the three railgun shots. In the darkness, Jin was watching the fort using the night vision mode on his helmet.

“Ah, Father, something’s coming.”

Reiko whose sight was even better than Jin’s with night vision engaged found two golems that had come out of the fort.

“They’re walking here. Golems, aren’t they. Their quality doesn’t seem to be very good.”

One could tell the quality of the golems by the way they walked. If their walking was clumsy then they were low-grade golems. However, crude force and such things couldn’t be measured with that.

After they had come about 20 meters closer Jin too could tell that they were golems. And their performance too.

“No way they’re friendly, huh.”

The two golems didn’t appear to have speech faculties, they kept silently walking closer as if trying to grab at Jin.

“What are you doing?”

Reiko swung the railgun in her hands once.

As it was made out of Adamantite its weight was approximately 50 kilograms, and the golems got crushed and rendered immobile after being hit by the railgun that weighed more than Reiko.

“How brittle...”

The exterior was bronze. Jin couldn’t understand at all why these golems had been sent out.

“Let’s try going a bit closer. Right, Ash, Elm, carry those golems as we go.”

“Yes, Chief.”

The SP, Ash and Elm, each took a golem apiece then moved while shouldering the unmoving golems. Land-50 and 51 were also with them.

In the dark of the night, Jin’s group got roughly 40 meters closer.

“Alright, aim at the walls of that fort and toss those golems. ...Oh, that’s right, I guess I’ll ask the Lands this time. Land-50, Land-51, please.”

“Yes, master.”

Land-50 and 51 simultaneously lifted up the golems, aimed towards the upper part of the fort’s walls, then threw the golems at full strength.

Incidentally, the Army golems’ maximum output was, using current Reiko as the standard, about 20 percent of hers. That in itself was outrageous.

The golems thrown with such force smashed against the fort’s wall and appeared to have been crushed flat as they sunk halfway in.



“W-wh-who are those people?”

While observing the outside, suddenly golems had come flying and were buried in the wall.

Seeing that, as you'd expect even Marcello was scared out of his wits. But he soon composed himself and began thinking.

“Hmm, that power, the golem with that fellow must be the strongest golem that took part in the golem party, right? In which case he should be Jin Nidou?”

The information about the golem party and the contents of yesterday's message matched.

“It's no longer the time to keep holding back, huh. ...[Light Ball].”

Marcello created three [Light Ball]s and had them float in front of the fort. The darkness vanished and it became bright.

There, there were four golems that appeared to be the battle-type, and a person in wearing a strange helmet who appeared to be giving them orders.

And then boggling his mind, there was a person who by all appearances was just a little girl, holding a mysterious weapon longer than her own body.

“Hm, so those guys are the ones who attacked?”

Marcello turned towards the voice, and there was Intact having regained his bearings looking out from another observation window.

“It appears so. The low-grade golems were not a match for them.”

“Hmph, because no one but me can mobilize the advanced battle-golems, I see. I do not care or know who they are, but I'll teach them a lesson.”

Intact then drew back for a moment, activated all of the battle-type golems and had them attack. However, as a secret weapon, he kept the strongest battle-type golem and the all-purpose golems in reserve.

Marcello watched and soon saw 15 battle-type golems come running to the front of

the fort.

“An over twofold difference in war potential, huh. Well, this should settle it.”



“Someone is be behind the opened observation window of the fort. They appear to be observing us.”

Reiko said, then [Light Ball]s rose up and illuminated the surroundings.

“So they finally noticed us, huh. In that case, next should be their full-power offensive, right? [Barrier].”

The defensive power of the reinforced clothing was great, but just in case Jin put up a [Barrier].

Before long, fifteen golems rushed out of the fort’s open front gate.

CHAPTER 33

GOLEM BATTLE

“15 enemy golems. Incoming!”

“Ash, Elm, Land-50, Land-51, intercept them.”

“Roger.”

Receiving Jin’s orders, the four golems rushed out.

The first ones to clash were the light-weight Ash and Elm. These two were the type that utilized their speed to the utmost while fighting.

Ash pretended to come grappling from the front, then in an instant leapt to the right and drove a backhand blow to the enemy golem’s head with his left hand.

Elm bent his body to avoid the fist the enemy golem swung, then reached out and powerfully smashed the enemy golem’s chin with his fist.

The two were effective against human opponents, but with golems the damage didn’t turn out to be great. The heads of the golems who ate the attacks were crushed, but unlike with humans it was no fatal wound.

Using current Reiko as the basis, the Army golems’ power output was about 20 percent of hers, while the SP’s was about ten percent.

Nevertheless they were able to destroy bronze golems with a single strike, while against battle-type golems the established tactic was aiming at the torso where the Control Core was.

“Hmm, they really are specialized in combat against humans after all.”

While Jin held such an impression, at that moment, Land-50 and 51 clashed with the enemy golems.

As expected of the Army golems, after their first blows struck two golems were turned into scrap and blown away.

Subsequently Land-50 and 51 both took golems in underarm holds, one golem per arm, then smashed them together.

Meanwhile, Ash and Elm had defeated their first two golems. Seven remained.

"Hmm, the Land golems do indeed use the brute force approach. Maybe it would be good if they learned some more martial arts."

Jin remembered how during the golem party Lotte had played an active role.

"Next time, let's also transcribe knowledge of martial arts to them."

And so Jin came to a decision in his heart.



"Oooh, what an impressive group!"

While observing the scene, Intact raised his voice in surprise.

"Mh-hm, they're strong. As I thought, he must be Jin Nidou for sure."

Marcello made a calm analysis.

"That is inconsequential! We must win! I will now go activate the strongest golems!"

With those words, Intact left. Marcello, left behind, breathed a sigh.

"Good grief, it appears we ended up throwing our military power in one by one. I suppose things will get hairy unless I make preparations to escape."



Little by little, Ash and Elm also appeared to be getting used to fighting against golems. At first they were fighting one against one, but now capitalising on their speed they both attacked the same golem together to beat it. This wasn't a game so it was alright.

On the other hand, Land-50 and 51 took the enemies straight on and utilizing their power scrapped them. As you might expect, they hadn't been able to take two golems in an underarm hold like earlier, but they had already defeated two more golems each, and another one just now. Ash and Elm also had beaten two more golems, and in the

end all fifteen enemy golems turned into scrap.

"Hmm, how should I say this, what a pity. Land-50, Land-51, collect them."

Simply because they were built for and used by a stupid master, they ended up like this. For research purposes too, Jin ordered the fifteen golems to be collected. And at that moment.

"Father, watch out!"

A black figure attacked Jin. Reiko noticed it and promptly protected him, but as that ruined her stance, she ended up being sent flying because of the weight difference.

However, as a result, the black figure too stumbled and stopped without being able to touch Jin.

Although Jin was also inside a [Barrier] he was a little surprised. And then he observed the enemy in front of him.

"...A dark gray golem, huh. It looks like its workmanship is different from the ones until now."

With a simple glance Jin was able to grasp its quality workmanship. The dark gray was also a sign of being coated with Adamantite.

And then the battle began anew.

As a substitute for Reiko who was some distance away from Jin after being sent flying, Ash and Elm leapt upon the dark gray golem.

But the difference in physique was great. The dark gray golem was 2.3 meters tall, contrasted to Ash and Elm who were 175 centimeters tall. The weight difference was likely nearly threefold.

Ash with the right arm, and Elm with the left arm. The opposing golem stopped them both with one hand each.

"Huh, you're rather strong, aren't you."

Jin looked on very interestedly.

"Hmm, the flow of energy isn't greatly different from the other golems. However,

there's a strange concentration that... Could it be?"

Jin had some questions regarding the way the enemy golem put out its energy and,
"Land-50, you try taking it on."

He gave the order.

Following the order, Land-50 moved to face the dark gray golem. Realizing that, the enemy golem shook off Ash and Elm.

"Ash, Elm, good work. Come back."

Jin ordered the SP to return back to Jin's side.

In front of him, the dark gray golem and Land-50 grappled. Hand gripped hand and they simply grappled and pushed.

"Huh, so it can put out the same amount of force as the Lands."

Jin once more observed. While he was doing that, Reiko warned him.

"Father, it's fine to observe the enemy, but if you don't keep it in moderation then the enemy leaders may escape."

Being told that, Jin contemplated. He was self-aware of his personality not fit for combat.

"You're right, I understand. But I'd like you to not destroy the research material too much. Alright, Land-51, Ash, Elm, Reiko. Suppress it."

"Roger."

"Understood."

Reiko swiped at the golem's legs. She put a little bit of strength to it probably as revenge for being sent flying earlier.

The enemy golem's knee joints were bent the wrong way and without being able to support itself it fell to the ground. Reiko *lightly* bashed the joints of its four limbs

Due to the four strikes that occurred in the blink of an eye, the connections of the enemy golem's limbs were partially destroyed. It wasn't in a state to put out any decent

force.

In addition, being pinned down by four golems and an automata even the enemy golem became unable to move. Jin approached it, touched its chest, and,

“[Erase].”

He removed the operating instructions of the Control Core. Now the dark gray golem would be unable to operate.

“It went well. I never thought I’d end up using this magic myself.”

All the golems that had come out were neutralized. Jin looked up at the fort. Reiko also looked up in front of Jin.

“The people who were here not long ago are gone, it seems.”

The faces peeking out of the small observation windows had disappeared and, although it was a little inaccurately, Reiko was also able to detect the presence of living things. Jin had faith in her judgment.

“Is that so. They probably want to escape. In that case, they went to the opposite side and are most likely going to use the river. Alright, here should be fine. Land-50, 51, in addition to Ash and Elm, stay behind to stand guard. If those Unifilers turn up, don’t let them escape. Reiko, come with me.”

Jin’s group was in front of the fort. If they wanted to run they’d probably do it by the river. Coming to that conclusion, Jin headed towards the river with Reiko. There Hydro-5 was waiting.

“Alright, let’s wait for the enemy to come.”

If they set out to the river on a boat there would no longer be a place to escape. He planned to catch them all at once. On the side of the fort facing the river there was a large gate. If they came out they would come out of there.

After about three minutes of waiting. As expected, the gate opened.

“Alright, there they are. Falcons, provide backup from the skies. However, hold back on attacking until I give the command.”

This time, Jin planned to hold back on displays of military power as much as possible.

In particular, he didn't want them to learn of the military air power.

The enemy boat was a large boat. It was painted black, and could board probably around 50 people. Four oars stuck out on the left and right sides each, apparently rowed by golems.

"Hmm, even with this night vision mode, it's still a bit dark."

Jin complained, although he was still able to observe what was going on in the lightless environment using the night vision mode. Hydro-5 pursued the boat silently, waiting until the boat had come to about the middle of the river.

"Alright, [Light Ball]."

Jin made five [Light Ball]s and had them float around. The surroundings were lit up bright.



"It's an a-a-ambush!?"

Because of the [Light Ball]s, the boat Jin was on was also made obvious.

"What, you're telling me they pursued us with a small boat like that?"

Intact made light of Hydro-5 which looked like a small boat that could barely board four people, but Marcello was different.

"Branch head, that is not the case. That boat has no oarsman."

"What?"

At present, the propulsion mechanism of this world's boats (excluding those rowed by people) were golems. Seeing no golem as an oarsman meant that Marcello was doubtful.

"Is the golem underwater?"

Marcello had heard talk of a mermaid-type golem that had previously appeared in the golem boat race held in Elias Kingdom, and so he arrived at that guess.

"Hey, attack! Magic troops, to the front! Fire!"

Giving a backwards glance to Marcello, Intact ordered the magicians to aim at the small boat and cast [Flame Ball]s.

However, before they reached the small boat it was as if the [Flame Balls] had met an invisible wall as they all burst and scattered without single one hitting.

“Hey, what are you doing, shoot a barrage!”

Intact was agitated and irritated by there being no result.

While watching, Marcello thought that people manipulated with [Hypno] really aren't fit to be leaders.

CHAPTER 34

AQUATIC BATTLE

“Magic troops, fire! Keep firing!”

At the command of the branch head of the sixth division, Intact, the magic troops shot out [Flame Ball]s one after another.

“...But really, they don’t have a strategy or anything. Isn’t the branch head just an idiot?”

While protected from magic by the deployed [Barrier], Jin thought.

“Well, let’s keep on observing the situation for a bit longer. They’ll probably soon run out of Magic Energy and become unable to attack.”

Maintaining a [Barrier] required little Magic Energy, but [Flame Ball] required quite a lot.

Maybe because they realized [Flame Ball]s were making no progress, this time three [Flame Lance]s came flying.

But, those were also readily stopped by the [Barrier].

And with that, no more magic was shot.

“Branch head, everyone’s overtaxed their Magic Energy...”

The head of the magic troops reported with a blue face, but Intact simply kept being enraged.

“Useless! You’re all useless!”

At that moment, a shock ran through the boat they were on.

“Alright, Reiko, this time using steel rounds fire five shots at their boat.”

This time Jin wasn’t planning to use a lot of special attack manoeuvres.

At any rate, disregarding the railgun’s power, it was basically the same as a catapult or a slingshot which had equivalents in this world.

Although no matter what it was impossible for them to shoot at speeds surpassing Mach 20.

“Yes, Father.”

The [Barrier] was temporarily rescinded, and Reiko prepared to shoot the railgun.

“Ah, that’s right. There’s no need to use full power. Let’s see, five percent should be enough?”

“Understood.”

The opponents had a wooden ship. There was no way it had the means to stop a steel ball that had –even at five percent power– an initial velocity that surpassed the speed of sound.

As you’d expect the recoil made even Hydro-5 move about 10 meters backwards, but it returned to its original position right away.

On the other hand, to speak of the Unifilers’ boat.

The hull jolted together with a dull impact sound. If you looked you could see a girl on the small boat holding a long tube pointed towards their ship.

“Don’t tell me that’s a Magi Tool!?”

The eyes of the vice-head of the branch Marcello went wide in shock. But the branch head Intact, he panicked.

“Whawhawha, whaat!? What was that? Someone say something!!”

“Due to a mysterious attack, two of the four golems moving the ship have been damaged!”

“Numerous holes have appeared in the ship’s hull!”

That’s not what he wanted to hear, Intact yelled. Then, the ship jolted violently and inclined.

One of the shots hit below the waterline and the ship began to flood from there.

“A-aaaargh!”

In his panic, Intact summoned the all-purpose golem.

“Yes-branch-head.”

“H-hold me! Listen, don’t let go until I tell you to!”

“Yes-sir.”

Because he couldn’t stand on top of the ship’s deck, Intact used his only remaining secret weapon, the all-purpose golem to hold his body up.

“Sigh, now I can relax. How is the damage? What in the world was that attack?”

When this late in the game Intact could only put on airs of dominance, Marcello began thinking that it’s about time to wash his hands off the man.

“You bastards! Are you people really going to silently accept this incomprehensible attack!? Shoot your bows, throw your spears, anything! If the magic troops have recovered even a little then fire your magic!”

And so on, Intact kept yelling orders.

Then two archers heeded the commands and stood up on the side of the ship to aim at Hydro-5.

The archers were certainly skilled, as they shot two arrows from the shaking and slanted ship towards Hydro-5 without erring.

However, before they reached Hydro-5, they were stopped by the [Barrier] and fell down to the water.

Then, simply as payback, three steel rounds were fired, two of which hit below the waterline. One of them pierced through the cabin.

“Hull damaged! It’s impossible to repair! Water is coming in!”

A report came from the cabin. Marcello gave a sidelong glance at the ranting and raving Intact and gave his orders.

“This ship is already lost. Everyone abandon ship. Even a plank will do, find something that looks like will keep you afloat and jump into the water with it! ”

“Y-y-y-you imbecile, Marcello, you say you bastards are going to abandon the ship!?”

While hooting and hollering in his agitation, Intact drew closer to Marcello.

At that moment, two more shots hit the ship. One of them destroyed the right arm of the all-purpose golem. The all-purpose golem lost its balance and fell into the river taking Intact with it.

“Aaaaaaaagh...”

After the scream a splash, the sound of him hitting water.

The all-purpose golem abided by its orders, and even underwater did not let go of Intact. And then Intact, or rather, no human could speak underwater.

As a result, in the middle of the river, the all-purpose golem simply sunk down while firmly keeping hold of Intact.

“All hands abandon ship! Abandon ship!”

Marcello went around yelling loudly, and when he recognized that no one was left to jump off, he himself also grabbed a nearby piece of wood and jumped into the water holding it.

“Father, everyone has left the ship.”

“Yeah. The ship’s about to sink too. Alright, let’s finish this.”

Jin ordered Reiko to shoot two lead shots.

“Yes.”

The soft lead was smashed along with the impact, spread wide, and conveyed its kinetic energy without waste to the ship's hull.

And the result.

"Wh-whawha, whawhawha"

In front of the Unifilers floating on the river, the boat they had just been on was smashed to smithereens.

"Alright, next is the fellows floating on the water, I suppose. Reiko, let them have it with the smallest current [Thunder Rain] you can."

"Yes, Father."

Right now one of the quickest ways to deal with the people in the water was to give them an electric shock, using lightning from the skies.

And so Reiko cast [Thunder Rain] at the smallest possible output she could manage.

For an instant, the river surface was dyed purple. Around 100,000,000 volts rained upon the floating Unifilers' heads.

Urgh, argh, and similar short screams: all the Unifilers on the surface of the river fainted. Despite being submerged in water, their hearts probably wouldn't last as long as they weren't extremely unlucky.

However, there were two of those extremely unlucky people, and two who sank while unconscious due to the weight of their armor. Including Intact, that was a total of five people. By chance, the death toll was the same as the number of Reinhardt's guards.

"Alright, let's collect them."

And like this, the neutralized members of the Unifilers were scooped up with the fishing nets on Hydro-5. The total turned out to be 28 people.

"For now, let's tie them up properly."

The Land golems were made to be on alert on the riverbed, and the unconscious Unifilers were handed over to them. As he didn't have suitable rope with him, Jin fashioned a wire rope out of golem fragments using Craft Magic.

"Now then, I suppose I'll consult with Reinhardt about what to do with these guys."

Although they failed in the end, they had abducted a diplomat of Shouro Empire, so Jin was hesitant to deal with them on his own.

Or rather, he thought the one who bore the largest grudge must be Reinhardt, so he figured he'd ask for Reinhardt's opinion first.

Reinhardt then turned up while being guarded by the Army golems Land-58, 59, and 60.

"Jin!"

"Reinhardt! Are you alright?"

"Yeah, thanks you to."

Reinhardt said and smiled, but Jin noticed that there was no energy behind that smile. Looking it over, there was a choker on his neck.

"Don't tell me! Sorry, Reinhardt. I should've realized it earlier."

Jin said and laid his fingers on the choker.

"No Jin, this isn't something that's so easy to—"

And then he tore choker off. Without Reinhardt even feeling that Jin had pulled on it.

"Take...off..."

"Hm?"

Reinhardt looked at Jin who was viewing the taken off choker annoyedly, and smiled bitterly.

"Good grief, what in the world did you do to get that off so easily?"

"What did I do, umm... The moment I touched it with my fingers I got this indescribably *baaad* feeling, so I opposed it with Magic Energy which made it as soft as clay and I tore it off, or something like that?"

The choker had a function to, using Magic Energy, adjust its size to the chokee's neck. If this function's parts were overcharged with Magic Energy, let's say by ten times the

capacity, it was true that it would malfunction but for Jin to know that he would have to examine this choker in detail.

"Hmm, well, let's leave the detailed investigation for later, as Stearina was also caught along with me. Please also take off her choker."

Reinhardt said and Jin was surprised,

"I heard of that. The place were you were attacked was Stearina-san's house, after all."

"Yeah, her secondary home to be precise."

Speaking of Stearina, she was still unconscious after being carried by Cosmos.

"Yeah, it must be because of this choker. It's got a Magi Formula that undermines your physical condition inscribed in it."

Jin took off Stearina's choker while saying so.

"What!? So that must be why I was feeling somewhat listless. Thanks, Jin. ...Leaving that aside, what's up? That's a very unusual helmet. I don't know if I should even call it clothing?"

The helmet Jin was wearing was more like a sci-fi movie prop. Right now his night vision visor was flipped up so his face could be seen, but if it was down probably no one could tell who he was.

"It's the new equipment I made. It's been rather helpful."

Jin then put on a serious look and pointed towards the unconscious and tied up Unifilers.

"Reinhardt, how should we deal with these guys?"

He asked.

CHAPTER 35

REFLECTION

“They’re the criminal group who kidnapped the Shouro Empire diplomat Reinhardt, so I’m leaving dealing with them to you. ...Oh, wait a minute.”

As if he had just remembered it, Jin took a Magi Crystal out of his reinforced clothing’s pocket, got nearer the fainted Unifilers and used [Transfer Info] on the man he felt was the most important-looking among them.

“Now I’ll surely get my hands on some information that’s a little better.”

The branch head of the eighth subdivision, Purcell, whose knowledge he read through last time did not have decent information.

And then, the moment he put it back in his pocket.

A figure suddenly rushed out of the darkness and knocked Jin off his feet. Jin’s body sailed through the air and flew a distance of about five meters.

“Jin!”

“Father!”

The one who sent Jin flying was the all-purpose golem that had sunk in the river together with Intact. As its right hand had been destroyed by Reiko with her railgun, getting up from the river took it some time.

Of course, Intact whom it had kept hold of according to his orders had drowned and was no longer of this world.

But the all-purpose golem, while not to the extent of Jin’s golems, was autonomic and when it had confirmed that Intact had died it knew to transfer the rights to command it to the next person, the vice branch head Marcello.

Then when it saw that Marcello had been rendered unconscious and tied down it attacked the enemy standing closest, namely Jin.

Jin who had been launched about five meters by the hit lay on the ground, unmoving.

"How dare you do that... To Father!"

At the same time as Reiko spoke those words she dealt a blow to the all-purpose golem. She brandished the railgun in her hand and struck from overhead.

殴られた敵ゴーレムはもんどりうつて吹っ飛んでいく。
衝撃で四肢は半ばもげてしまっていた。

「やつぱりこれはいいですね！」

敵万能ゴーレムの中には、振るわれる魔力砲を手で
押さえようとしたものもあつたが、結果は変わらなかつた。



Reiko used so much strength it could even bend the barrel of the Adamantite-made railgun, literally all of her strength.

For some reason the force didn't sink the all-purpose golem into the ground, instead it crushed flat as if it was an empty can driven over by a truck.

"Jin! Pull yourself together!"

On the other hand, Reinhardt ran up to Jin to look after him.

"U...uhh?"

"Jin! You're awake!? Great!"

"Father!"

After defeating the all-purpose golem Reiko also rushed over to Jin's side at once.

"I am so sorry! Please punish me as you'd like!!"

Reiko knelt down in front of Jin who had returned to consciousness. However, Jin just spoke to her with a kind voice.

"Reiko, I'm okay. So raise your head."

"J-Jin, are you really okay? You were hit by the golem and launched five meters away, right?"

But Jin replied with a smile.

"Ah, my reinforced clothing defended against the impact. It seems like I somehow fainted, but that appears to be because of the shock of hitting the ground after flying five meters."

Jin stood up, waved both his hands around and stomped his feet to show he was okay.

"Oh, you really are okay. It didn't seem like you were alive."

"Father..."

Reiko looked depressed. If she could cry she would likely be in floods of tears.

Then around her the SP imitated Reiko and knelt down. It was somehow surreal.

“I said I’m fine, everyone. Nothing happened to me.”

The reinforced clothing made with the Sea Dragon as a material was able to bear the strike of the all-purpose golem, although its right hand had been destroyed. It wasn’t a very happy situation, but he did confirm its ability in combat.

“Jin, I’m truly happy that you came to rescue me. But you really should take care of yourself a little more.”

“Eh?”

“Starting with Reiko-chan, the golems are your children. If something happened to you everyone would be sad. You should understand that.”

Even Reinhardt was full of emotions regarding the golems and Automata Jin had built, and he gave Jin a word of warning.

“In the first place, I don’t think you’re cut out to making commands on-site.”

Jin gratefully accepted Reinhardt’s advice that didn’t mince words.

“You’re...right. I understand, I’ll be careful. Thanks, Reinhardt.”

“Mmh.”

And like that, the result of Jin’s consultation with Reinhardt was that the caught Unifilers would be escorted by Land-58, 59, and 60 to the city of Dali, then delivered to Celuroa Kingdom through Shouro Empire’s stationed troops. The fact was that as a diplomat, Reinhardt couldn’t give priority to personal grudges.

After having them go that way on foot, Jin thought about what to do with Reinhardt and Stearina who had yet to wake up.

Eventually, as it was still dark, he decided to take them near Dali with Hydro-5.

“Oooh! So this is a boat Jin made!”

Reinhardt was excited once he saw Hydro-5.

“It’s not moved by a golem, huh!”

As it was a hassle Jin said to calm Reinhardt down that he'd explain it all later, then got on the boat.

As its capacity was more or less four people, all seats were taken with the driver Marine-5, Jin, Reinhardt and Stearina. However, Reiko said,

“I will not be separated from Father.”

She did not yield. With no other choice Jin decided to go while having Reiko sit on his knee. The bent railgun was put in the luggage space. Even like this there was leeway with the load capacity.

“Then, let us depart.”

Marine-5 said and started Hydro-5. As they were going downstream, and although the boat was meant for only four people it moved at a speed of over 50 kilometers per hour.

The Army golems withdrew using Falcon-2, with the exception of Land-58, 59, and 60, who were escorting the Unifilers.

“Reinhardt, I’m just letting you know, but the Celuroa Kingdom guards were very unmotivated, I think? Even when Reinhardt and Stearina-san were kidnapped they didn’t seem to be making any moves.”

“I suppose. I can somehow understand.”

“Besides, the butler, Claude was it? He was apparently shut out of the crime scene.”

Jin explained the details of what Sage and Cosmos of the SP saw when they stopped at the crime scene to investigate.

“Hmm, so they’re that rotten, huh.”

While talking about that, the town of Dali came to sight. They had taken less than 30 minutes. As getting too close would be trouble Hydro-5 approached the riverbank. Here a problem arose.

The town of Dali was on the left side of the river, while the captives were on the right side.

“I guess there’s no other choice. Near here, if I’m not mistaken, there’s a town that I

think was called Jiron, but there's sure to be stationed forces there too. Let's deliver them there."

Reinhardt said, and so Hydro-5 went across to the right side of the river.

"Sorry to ask you this, but please somehow explain away my involvement in this. And please take care of Stearina-san."

Right now, Celuroa Kingdom's and Shouro Empire's soldiers would have a lot of question which would just be a waste of time and above all, bothersome to handle.

And so, while feeling sorry about it Jin left all of the cleanup to Reinhardt.

"Good grief, I suppose I have to. In exchange, I hope you'll make up for it later?"

Reinhardt said and flashed a mischievous smile.

Then,

"What, didn't I just save you?"

Jin said and smiled.

"Haha, I'm kidding. Well, leave the diplomatic matters to me."

Reinhardt replied and took things over.

Despite that, Jin was worried about Stearina who still hadn't woken up, and so Jin left Reinhardt with the word that he'll have medicine delivered to him afterwards, and had him disembark.

There Reinhardt's personal guards Sage and Cosmos were already waiting, and the unconscious Stearina was entrusted to them.

They got in touch with Land-58 and the others through ManaCom, and apparently their trip would take about four and a half hours.

"Really sorry about this, Reinhardt. I'll leave the rest to you!"

Jin left those words behind, Hydro-5 once again started and moved upstream.

Once they were in a place where town of Dali wasn't in sight, Falcon-1 and 3 landed. Falcon-3 came to a still above the river so that Hydro-5 could be brought on board on suspensions. It sprayed water everywhere.

Then Jin and Reiko boarded Falcon-1. While doing so, Jin took one of the medicine ampoules out of the first-aid kit of the plane, and asked Reiko to quickly deliver it to Reinhardt.

"I understand, but Father, please don't leave the Falcon no matter what, okay?"

Reiko asked to make sure of it. Jin smiled awkwardly and nodded.

"Now then, I'll be back soon."

Reiko said and disappeared.

Reiko traveled the distance of around three kilometers in about a minute. Her speed was nearly 200 kilometers per hour.

"Reinhardt-san."

"O- oh, Reiko-chan, what's up?"

"This is restorative medicine. It is very effective, so please use it in two half-doses."

Reiko said and presented the ampoule of medicine.

"Ah, is that so. Thanks for your trouble."

Reinhardt thanked her and accepted it.

"I'll be going now."

No sooner than Reiko had said so, she turned aside and left like the wind.

"Father! Are you alright!?"

"Oh, Reiko, that was fast."

"...Great, you're uninjured."

"Obviously. Who do you think I am?"

However, Reiko didn't answer that and,

"Come on, hurry, let's quickly go home."

She said. Jin sympathized with Reiko's sentiments and instructed the piloting Sky-11 to return.

And thus, Falcon-1 and Falcon-3 soared in the skies of dawn.

Hydro-5 was suspended in Falcon-3, but it was still as fast as Falcon-1. This was because by practical use of wind magic, the air streams around the plane's fuselage could be controlled.

The Pelicans could also do this. All the models with thick fuselages had the same function.

On the return trip to Hourai Island, Jin explained the details of Reinhardt's rescue to Elsa through ManaCom.

On the other side of the ManaCom Elsa breathed a sigh of relief. Maybe she was thinking about the time she had been kidnapped herself.

And once that was done with, although only for a brief while, Jin took a nap. Reiko intently stared at Jin's sleeping face.

Falcon-1 kept flying towards the morning sun rising over the horizon, heading for Hourai Island.

CHAPTER 36

SIDE STORY 7:

MEANWHILE, IN KAINA VILLAGE

April, Kaina Village was brimming with energy.

Spring was the season when hills and fields began sprouting plants, and children concentrated on nothing but playing outside.

The adults plowed the fields in preparation for planting crops.

Last autumn even the wheat that had been sown had grown a lot, and weeding the field was necessary.

“Hannah-chan, there’s a lot here~”

“There’s a lot here too~”

Hannah and Patty, who was a year younger than Hannah, were picking wild herbs at the riverbed of river Elume.

Angelica, cress, and mitsuba. They were herbs even children could pick. Because there were no poisonous plants that resembled them, they could be collected without worry.

“Ah, Hannah-chan, found you~”

The one who came and spoke out was the tomboy Jessie.

This season, the girls of the village were busy picking wild herbs. The riverbed and the fields, edges of the forest, and other grassy places were visited and the herbs were picked.

After overcoming the season of winter, they fully enjoyed spring’s delights in the hills and fields, while also being able to resupply the vitamins that one was prone to lack during winters.

Without even being aware of such a thing, the knowledge of how to pick herbs in the

spring was imparted from parent to child, and from child to grandchild.

The children who had picked herbs until the long spring day was coming to an end went to the hot springs to wash off their sweat before returning.

“Ahh~, it feels so nice~”

“Hanna-chan, I’ll wash your back.”

“Mh, thanks~”

In the hot springs the children washed each other’s backs.

Just before Jin left the village, he had taught the people how to use the ritha seeds to wash their bodies and clothing.

The ritha seeds ripened in autumn and were said to become poisonous so no one had got involved with them but,

“Isn’t this washnut?”

Jin had muttered by himself, brought a large quantity of the seeds to dry in the sun, then ground them to a powder. Mixing a little bit of that with water and rubbing made foam which made dirt to come off.

“If you use it every day your skin will become rough, so it’s better to use it only when you’re very dirty.”

He had said something like that.

Until then they had used lye for washing, but as the powder made out of ritha seeds was better for getting off dirt, everyone in the village had gathered ritha seeds together.

“Granny, I’m back~”

“Welcome back, Hannah. You gathered a lot, I see.”

Grandma Martha looked at the plentiful herbs in the basket Hannah was holding and

smiled.

“Let’s make a lot of things out of them this evening, shall we?”

“Yeah! Great~!”

That evening they had herb salad and boiled greens. Of course they also had bread made out of sieved wheat flour.

“Delicious.”

“Thanks to everything Hannah picked up, of course it’s delicious.”

And so the cheerful dinnertime passed.

The evening in Kaina Village passed quickly. The sun had set and most of the houses were dark so it was about time to go to bed.

For lighting they did have torches and tallow lamps, but normally using them was wasteful so nearly no houses did.

“Good night, granny.”

“Good night, Hannah.”

Even in Martha’s house the dinner was at five in the evening, and by seven o’clock they had fallen asleep.

Accordingly, everyone’s morning came early.

Everyone woke up together with the sunrise.

“Good morning, granny.”

“Good morning, Hannah.”

Everybody went to rinse their mouths and wash their faces at the common well.

“Onii-chan...”

Every time she operated the pump and water came out, she couldn't help but think about Jin.

"...I hope you're well."

The same day, Hannah got on the golem horse Mint and went to the mountains to pick edible wild plants.

Today accompanying her was the golem Gen.

Of course Jin having returned was still a secret, so Gen acted such that Hannah or the village people didn't notice him.

Clippety-clop, the hooves sounded as Hannah headed towards the mountains.

"Oh~, it's Hannah-chan~"

Noticing her, the children greeted Hannah.

"Hannah-chan, I'm jealous~"

The only one who had a horse for their exclusive use was Hannah. The other five horse golems Ein, Zwei, Drei, Quatre, and Cinq were all for communal use.

If the children asked the village head who managed them they could borrow one, but Hannah having a horse of her own nonetheless made them jealous.

"Mint, the horse Onii-chan made is for me, he said."

Hannah caressed Mint's neck while grumbling.

Mint moved past the grassy plains and when coming to a mountain patch, continued on briskly walking without stopping.

Then after about 20 minutes of climbing she arrived at the summit of the hill. It was over twice faster than walking

Below, Kaina Village looked small. Hannah reminisced about the time when last year she had come here to pick up medicinal plants with Jin. But she couldn't stay like that forever.

“I have to pick plants.”

Hannah got off Mint and immediately began collecting edible herbs.

Today one of the plants she came to look for was the lily bulb. It was common to pick them up during autumns when the aboveground parts had matured, but last autumn the mountain beasts had been disturbed so she wasn’t able to come pick them.

Another one was the mountain leek. It was also an edible wild plant, but it was very good nourishment. It was very effective on one’s body that had been somewhat weakened after passing through winter.

Hannah knew both plants well. The mountain leek in particular had many varieties of poisonous plants that resembled it, but as she knew how to differentiate them there was no worry of making a mistake.

It was sure that Hannah was a smart girl.

She continued gathering the plants until lunch, and stopped when her basket was full.

After tightly fastening the basket to Mint, she straddled the horse and got on her way back home.

Going downhill was even faster, and she returned in less than 15 minutes.

“I’m back~”

“Welcome back, Hannah. Good work. You’re not hurt, right?”

“Nope!”

“Then I’ll start making lunch now, so lend me a hand.”

“Ye~s.”

After taking down the basket from Min, Hannah went to the well to wash her hands.

In the afternoon, the merchant Roland’s carriage came along.

“Hey, Roland-san, we’ve been waiting.”

“Gheebeck-san, it’s been a while. It’s gotten warmer, hasn’t it?”

“Yes, indeed.”

The last time he had come was before mid-January, and as it had then still been winter, it was completely different from now.

“So what about Jin-san?”

“Yeah, he hasn’t come back.”

Every time Roland came he had this conversation with the village head.

“Is that so... I wanted some rubber balls though.”

Apparently the rubber balls Jin had made and sold turned out to be pretty popular. However, as no one but Jin could make them there was nothing to sell even if they wanted to.

“Can’t help it if there’s none, I guess.”

As usual, food, salt, flavoring and so on was sold, and fire-attribute Magi Stones were bought.

Hannah looked at the scene from a small distance away.

And then night came once more.

It was a little windy so the windows were closed.

Come to think of it, Jin was the one who made these muscovite windows, Hannah thought.

It had been four months since Jin’s disappearance, and Hannah could still not forget about Jin.

Looking up through the window at the skies, the stars were twinkling.





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